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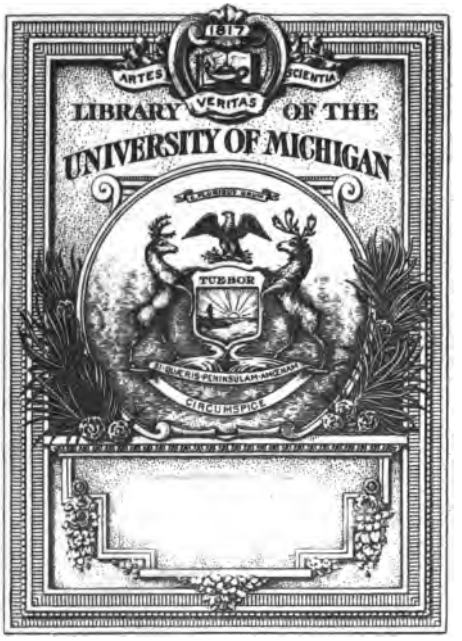

FROM THE ESTATE OF
PRESIDENT HARRY B. HUTCHINS

BV
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With Christmas greetings
and best wishes from
Dr and Mrs Hutchins from
Mr and Mrs Lloyd C Douglas

1920

WANTED—
A CONGREGATION

Wanted—
A Congregation

By
LLOYD C. DOUGLAS
Minister First Congregational Church,
Ann Arbor, Michigan

CHICAGO
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1920

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To H. H. S.

From the Estate of
President Wa[illegible]
3-10-30

INTRODUCTORY

IT may not be very important that you should read this book at all. But if you propose to do so, it is very important that you should begin where you are now. To omit this introductory chapter will mean to your perusal of this volume exactly what it means to fish without bait.

Everybody says there is something wrong with the churches. Everybody may be mistaken. Once everybody thought the earth was flat and the biggest thing in the universe. Everybody was wrong. Once everybody thought that blood-letting was the first and most important thing to do in any case of illness. Everybody was wrong again. Everybody may be wrong this time. The churches may be functioning properly.

Usually, though, it will be found that what everybody thinks is worth considering. What

everybody deplores is likely to prove deplorable. What everybody fears is enough to cause an anxious hour. At all events, we will do well to investigate; and if we find that there is nothing wrong with the churches, we can all go back to our work with joy. Just at present, we are somewhat disturbed by all the racket. It will be good to satisfy ourselves, at least, that there is nothing the matter.

The rumor is abroad that something ails the churches. It is more than a rumor. It has become a fixed, albeit reluctant, belief. Moreover, this belief is practically unanimous. Ask anybody. Listen to the mill-hands discussing the problem during the noon-hour at the factory. Read the report of the conclave of Bishops, or the convention of the Elders and Betters of any denomination, and get the same reaction. Something wrong. Catch up a cross-section of conversation in the Pullman, club lounge, hotel lobby, wherever you like—and while the phraseology differs, the conclusion is but one! Something ails the churches.

Some people view the situation with genuine alarm. Others, unable to add anything to their own spiritual stature, are not sorry that something has happened to cause discomfort to an

institution serving as the standard and form of religious life. It eases the requirements of their own consciences.

Not infrequently, people are saying that something is wrong with The Church! So easy is it to mistake "the container" for "the thing contained" that they are speaking of "the waning influence of The Church." Of course, this is a mere impertinence. It testifies to the unplumbed depths of their ignorance of history.

It reminds one of the story that is told of a recently rich man who was "doing Europe" in the company of his overdressed family, two maids, a Pekingese pup, and a valet. This man, upon whom Fortune was sardonically grinning, rather than smiling, understood that it was the proper thing to visit historic shrines, view celebrated pictures, and mumble incoherent expressions of awe before certain sculptured figures of the great. But because he lacked the mental background to appreciate the significance of these priceless legacies, they had no other than intrinsic value for him. Unable to look on through and past the statue, for a distance of centuries, to the causes and conditions which had more to do with produc-

ing it than the genius of the sculptor, it was, for him, only a huge chunk of rock which somebody, with an unfamiliar and unpronouncable name, had once hacked at with a chisel.

One afternoon the rich man went alone into one of the most widely-known of the picture-galleries. He did not provide himself with a catalogue; neither did he solicit the advice of the attendants concerning these artistic treasures. He rushed about, from room to room, and from picture to picture, like a belated traveller hunting for the proper ticket-window in a metropolitan railroad-station. Leaning far over the railing, he would peer hastily at a picture, and then rush away to peck at another in humming-bird fashion. It was plainly to be seen that he was not finding what he sought.

In twenty minutes, he was quite done, and ready to leave the gallery. With that raw insolence with which sudden wealth has a trick of endowing the proletarian mind, it occurred to the flashily-dressed tourist that he might ease his disappointment somewhat by announcing it. Noticing the white-haired verger sitting by a window, reading, he stalked arrogantly

over to him, and, assuming an attitude as nearly resembling indignant hauteur as the imagination of an ex-blacksmith could conceive, he said, harshly, "I've been hearing, all my life, about these famous masterpieces. Masterpieces—bah! Daubs, I call 'em! Very inferior! I want you to know that I am greatly disappointed! I feel that I have been wasting my time!"

The old verger put down his book, polished his glasses reflectively, gazed with interest into the man's face, and quietly replied, "Sir, these pictures are not on trial. The spectators are!"

The implication of this story should be good for our souls, just now. Surely, it is rather unbecoming for a people whose most enduring national works still reek of green lumber, hot rivets, damp plaster, fresh paint and perspiration, to express grave doubts of the survival of an institution that was ancient and venerable more than a whole millenium before civilization had become apprized of the startling information that this continent had been discovered.

Whoever, in this raw, new, western world voices the fear that "the influence of The Church is waning"—meaning that Christian-

ity, as a system, is on the decline—only certifies to the almost incredible lengths to which naive bumptiousness can go in a land of unrestricted gabble! No; it has been a very long time since The Church passed out of her experimental stage. She does not now happen to be on trial. The spectators are, however; and unless they wish to earn the contempt of their posterity, they will leave off all this noisy impudence about "the impending crisis" of that to which present-day humanity is indebted for practically every worth-while thing it owns.

Call everybody's attention to this fact, and nobody will disagree. You will win the case. But nobody will be satisfied. It will be concluded that you have merely practised a skillful evasion of the question at issue. You have won on a technicality, only.

The problem still remains that the churches are in a bad way. In most of them—which means two-thirds the number registered ten years ago, for one-third of them have closed up for lack of leadership—only a small per cent of the membership ever thinks of attending religious services regularly. It is quite customary for a church to be unable to secure the attendance of more than one-fourth the number

of people who might be accommodated in its auditorium. Young people are losing interest. The "Young People's Society" is no longer a debatable matter, as formerly. In all but a small per cent of the churches, that controversy has been quite decided—in the negative.

Preachers are becoming discouraged. It is no secret that many of them are detained in the ministry only by economic reasons. Were they able to launch upon other vocational waters, they would change their uniform tomorrow!

Every denomination is shouting that unless the ministry is speedily recruited with young men, a few more years will bring disaster!

What will save the situation? Anybody who has a remedy to propose is welcome to the platform.

Otherwise the author would hesitate to presume. He speaks only because the discussion is free for all.

One of the most fascinatingly interesting bits of ceremonial drama enacted by ancient Israel occurred on the annual Day of Atonement, when there was imputed to a goat the

entire grist of the nation's twelve months' sinning.

Whether the current use of this word "goat" to designate a person who has been made custodian of other opinions, schemes, burdens and perplexities than he, himself, has conceived or earned, is none of the author's affair; though he suspects that the connotation might be traced to other sources with less warrant.

Indeed, so common has this word become, to signify one obliged to render a thankless service, that a well-known business man has recently objected to The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, on the ground that the latter were entitled to something better in another world, in view of all they had gone through here.

That, however, is a problem of exegesis, and does not concern this work at all.

The ceremonial goat, of the ancient ritual, was duly assigned his shameful errand, after which he was led forth into the wilderness by the hand of a fit man.

There he was expected to lose himself as promptly as possible.

This book is somewhat like that ceremony. Some may dislike the "wilderness" implica-

tion. Some may suspect that the crusade may never get so far as the wilderness. Some may agree, however, that it will be lost if it does.

Some may doubt, as modestly does the author, whether the sacrifice is being led forth by the hand of a fit man.

But everybody, who reads this story, will agree that Rev. D. Preston Blue is the goat. To him are assigned many ideas, convictions, plans, and executions thereof, which almost any live man would prefer to predicate of a hypothetical character.

Of course this book is intended primarily for preachers. Some thoughtful and zealous laymen may wish to read it, too. Its producers hope that may come true. Possibly the Jimmie Bardells, Tom MacGregors and David Tracys, here and there, may find it of interest also.

The author hereby expresses his deep obligation to The Christian Century for permission to reproduce certain features of a series of articles recently published in that journal under the same caption that this books bears; also for the encouragement he has had from that sanctum heartening him to undertake this adventure.

L. C. D.

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I

FAGGED AT FORTY

THE deep-toned Westminster chimes in the tower of Broad Street Church resonantly tolled the three-quarters.

This was the most important fact connected with Broad Street Church—the chimes.

Whenever anybody mentioned Broad Street Church, the other person said, "Oh yes, the church with the wonderful chimes!" They were, too.

Strangers always remarked that it was such an unusual thing to find so costly and excellent a peal of bells in a little city of twenty thousand. The story was always told, then. Everybody knew it. The little children knew it.

The bells were a gift—the gift of one Deacon Mallet who, on the homestretch of a long and lonely pilgrimage, had decided to warn Middlepoint, every fifteen minutes, of life's brevity.

Had he been a favorite, perhaps the inter-

vals between Mallet's posthumous announcement anent the flight of time might have seemed more conveniently spaced; but because he had been an irascible, hard-fisted (some even said crooked) old curmudgeon, whose name was employed more frequently as an improper adjective than a proper noun, certain elderly bookkeepers and weary draughtsmen, erstwhile of his employ, maintained that the deacon's ghost regulated the church clock.

On fine days, it was alleged, the ghost was known to get astride the pendulum and ride, with dragging feet, from 4:15 to 4:45, chuckling wickedly to itself that life wasn't so deucedly brief, after all.

At the three-quarters, however, apparently weary of its cynical amusement, the testy old spook invariably speeded up the works, in the hope of making a few ultra-conscientious clerks miss the 5:10 car for Newlywed Heights or some other remote locality.

Four-forty-five always sounded pleasantly on the ear of Middlepoint's business-folk. Now they could get ready to go home.

D. Preston Blue, closer to this solemn and majestic announcement than any other—for was he not seated in the tiny basement office of

the church, directly underneath the tower—did not hear it.

For the space of two hours he had been in a brown study. At three o'clock he had found the letter with his other mail upon his desk, and had read it with surprise and delight. Then he had read it again—this time gently stroking his cheek with the back of his hand like a man who is slightly mystified. Then he walked over to the window and read the letter again, with an unmistakable expression of deep concern. He told Miss Brown she might go; that he wished to do some studying; no—he would not need her. She went. Then he read the letter once more, threw it upon the desk, and did about five rug-miles up and down the room, punctiliously confining his steps to a certain narrow green stripe in the carpet as if to lend straightness and accuracy to his jumbled thoughts.

Now he had flung himself into his chair, and was re-reading the letter, beautifully typed on an expensive paper topped with a handsomely embossed device certifying that The Bardell Manufacturing Company of Ironville was amply able to afford pleasing stationery. It ran as follows:

Dear Dan:

It is a great pity that so close a friendship as that of our college days should grow dim and feeble for lack of attention. I have often thought of you and wished that we might have a visit together.

I happen to know that you are to have a birthday on the tenth. I also know which birthday it is, because I am to have one just like it on the same day. Do you recall the time that Tom McGregor and you and I celebrated our birthdays? I guess you do, all right. Tom's wasn't till the eleventh, but we began commemorating on the tenth and made the festival last over, didn't we? That was our twenty-third—if I recall correctly.

I have decided to do something really grand this time. I am going to have a birthday party. I consider this tragic occasion of entering the roaring forties as sufficiently important to call for the aid and comfort of others similarly afflicted. So, I am writing to you and Tom, today, asking you both to be my house-guests on the tenth. I know you will not take it amiss if I add another to this list of drooling dotards—a very congenial sawbones of this town, my closest friend here, who also reaches his age of accountability at a proper date to make him entirely eligible to this solemn function.

I hope you are well and prosperous, and

that you will bring a youthful and merry face to my party. All the same—forty is a shock, is it not? It seems like a sort of final curve just before the back-stretch—surely a time of invoice.

Now, do not fail to humor me in this. My oxen and my fatlings are all killed, as I shall be if anything should interfere with your coming. Perhaps you had better wire me to relieve my suspense.

As of yore, loyally,

JIM.

"Go?"—the preacher had exclaimed, delightedly, at three. "Go?—Well, I think—rather!" Then he had read the letter again. This time, an annoying little phrase, lightly touched, if at all, on the first reading, seemed to stand out ominously, inquiringly—"surely a time of invoice!"

It had not occurred to him just that way before. "Forty is a shock . . . a sort of final curve just before the back-stretch!" This was the first time he had sensed it; but was it not true? He ran his long fingers through his thick, prematurely-silvered hair; then thrust his hands deeply into his pockets, and paced the floor—paced it by routine, like a grizzly at the zoo—and thought, and thought, and suffered.

D. Preston Blue had been fairly well satisfied with what life had dealt to him. His comparisons between his own career and that of other men were mostly made in the field of his own vocation. As preachers went, he had done pretty well. At thirty-five he had been called to Broad Street Church of Middlepoint, for example. It was openly declared, at the installation service, that it was quite unusual for so young a minister to be called to this pulpit. Oh—sometimes Blue fretted for an hour over the fact that he appeared to be running around in a circle, never arriving; but his colleagues were apparently accepting similar conditions without remonstrance; why should he complain?

But here was this party! First, there was Jimmie Bardell, who had it on his mind that "forty" was a shock—time of invoice—time of turning into the back-stretch. Jimmie had made good. He was a big man in Ironville; reputed to be a millionaire; philanthropic; generous; treasurer and official money-getter for half the charities of the county. Jimmie was a success, every way considered. Tom MacGregor was the managing editor of The Morning Star of Elmwood, a flourishing town of fifty

thousand, hard by a metropolis. Tom had easily capitalized his wit. His editorials were quoted volubly and widely, and his quips had been filmed for the admiring multitudes to whom his name meant a smile. Tom had probably not made much money, but he had won a place for himself in the public's heart. As for this other fellow—this doctor fellow—well, Jimmie Bardell wouldn't be likely to chum around with him unless he was somebody.

And what about this fourth member of the party—this D. Preston Blue? Had he anything to show for his forty? Had he anything to contribute to this mobilization of the invoicers and back-stretchers? He inquired of himself. An able preacher? Doubtless his friends would be kind enough to predicate that of him. Perhaps he was an able preacher; he didn't know. He had never been able to find out. The conditions had not been right. The first real chance he ever had was here in Broad Street Church, and old Broad Street—well, almost anybody could have told why a man couldn't do much with Broad Street. He, himself, did not know why; nobody had ever told him; he had not discovered it for himself—but the conditions were there. One shrugged, and

looked mysterious when one said it. Ah yes; the conditions were there.

But perhaps these other fellows had met conditions, too. Apparently they had dealt with theirs. Blue hadn't. Blue still had all the conditions. Indeed, as he invoiced his career, he was suddenly stricken with the paralyzing thought that he had not gained an inch or grown a pound, as a preacher, for ten years. He had become a little more confident. With a slightly increased income, he had been able to gratify a few more personal desires, buy more books, travel a little farther in August; and the expansion at this point had pushed back his whole horizon, just a very little; but, as a preacher, he was ambling along at the same old gait.

In simple truth, he was doing the same manner of business, and in almost exactly the same way, as during his cub year—down at Reed's Corners. Now, he would go to Jimmie Bardell's affair. Jimmie had made a go of it. While he, Blue, was at Reed's Corners, Bardell had been working side by side with four men in a small shack, making "parts" of a dredge. Now, Bardell owned a good-sized chunk of that town, was employer to half a thousand men,

and had shipped his product to every port of the seven seas! Then, there would be this Doctor So-and-so, reporting on the latest findings in medicine. He would be alert, resourceful, proud of his record. There would be Tom MacGregor, drawlingly confessing to his close acquaintance with men of letters, and revealing the fact, unconsciously, in every gesture, that he had arrived.

But he, Old Dan Blue, who had gone a-sky-piloting to the dismay of his comrades—he was pretty nearly a failure, as compared to the others. They might ask him what he had to report. Well—he could say that, as usual, he was spending about four afternoons of the week pushing door-buttons and inquiring how people did, and exchanging yawn-compelling inanities with good ladies who were benefited no more by his intrusion than he was pleased with his pursuit; serving as errand-boy and general roustabout for a dozen or more church auxiliaries with long names, short memories, frequent meetings, and feeble achievements; preaching listless sermons on Sundays to a small but select group of people, only a few of whom could be called "representative" in any other sense than that they represented a type

conspicuous in about eighty-three churches out of a hundred—good, honest, well-meaning, respectable, kind—and—and everything.

That was his job. That was what he had to report—not to the Central District Conference, either, but to Jimmie Bardell and Tom MacGregor and that other fellow, that doctor person! They would listen courteously, silently. Tom would puff his pipe and waggle his head, solemnly. The doctor would force a lying smile of assumed interest, and say, "Why, that's fine! You must get a lot of pleasure out of that—you bet!" Jimmie would suddenly remember that he wasn't doing his duty as host, and reprimand a servant for letting Dr. Blue's water-glass stand empty. And, in the general confusion of seeing to more water for Dr. Blue, the attention of the trio would be deflected from the hateful topic of conversation, and Jimmie would be reminded of something awfully funny that Old Dan Blue had pulled "when we were Juniors, Doc!"

All things considered, he feared he was not quite up to it. He would wire Jimmie about a funeral on the tenth. No—that was too far off for a funeral. It would be a wedding—important wedding that he couldn't possibly escape.

He would be sorry, but—and he really would be sorry, too. He wanted to go. But for this hateful "invoice" business, he would have gone.

It length, the ghost of Old Man Mallet had spoken about the dinner-hour. D. Preston Blue put on his hat, groped along the gloomy passage, and out; buzzed his little car; smiled almost too unctuously to a passerby when he realized that he was about to respond to a greeting with a very careworn face; and drove home, mechanically, still invoicing.

At dinner, he said, after a long silence, "Had a letter from my old college friend, Bardell, this afternoon. Wants to have a birthday party on the tenth. Inviting Tom MacGregor and me. It hits us all three. Jimmie thinks we ought to go into forty together."

"Why, isn't that perfectly splendid?" exclaimed Mrs. Blue, emphasizing every word. "I am so glad you can go. You'll have the time of your life!"

Blue toyed with his plate for a moment before replying, and then he said, slowly, "I—I don't believe so! that is—I don't see how I can get away."

" 'Get away'?" echoed Mrs. Blue. "Of course you can get away! And we must not let any-

thing happen to interfere with this trip. It will be splendid!"

And because he could not bring himself to the point of confessing to his hero-worshipping little wife exactly why he had hesitated, he consented to wire Bardell that he would come.

That night he slept badly. When at length he fell into a restless, troubled sleep, he dreamed that it was examination day for every man who had arrived at the age of forty. He was seated at a desk in a room so large that he could not see the ends of it, and all about him were men of his own age, writing industriously. His own list of questions was printed in type so small he could barely read anything but the heading, which said something about forty being a time of invoice, and that he had now turned into the back-stretch.

In the morning, however, things looked brighter. He hooted at his own misgivings of the previous afternoon. Wasn't he the minister of Broad Street Church of Middlepoint; the very best church, as to brick and mortar, anyway, in the whole conference? Why, practically everybody, for a radius of five hundred miles, had heard about the chimes!

II

A YARD OF NICKELS

ONCE he had decided to go, Blue quashed his forebodings and began to look forward to the birthday celebration with a great deal of pleasurable anticipation. Indeed, he had planned to take an earlier train so as to arrive in Ironville in the morning. A wire from Bardell had said that the big doings began at six sharp. But he would go on an earlier train and surprise Jimmie by visiting him at his office.

It was a delightful morning when the minister stepped off the luxurious train at nine in Ironville, groomed, breakfasted, and in fine fettle. He decided to walk leisurely to the plant which, he had learned, was only a half dozen blocks away.

"Well, Jimmie has been doing things—and no mistake!" he murmured, as he surveyed the long rows of shops surmounted with huge chimneys. The office building sat back from the street, fronted by a well-kept lawn. Flowers

and shrubbery added a touch of refinement to the otherwise stiff austerity of the place. Blue walked slowly up to the open door, unsuccessfully trying to repress the smile that had begun to deepen about the corners of his mouth. It would certainly be good to see dear old Jimmie, comrade of so many happy hours!

At the information desk, he said that he was an old friend of Mr. Bardell's and wished to greet him. No—he didn't care to send in his card; and no—he had no appointment; just wanted to take him by surprise. The young woman smiled graciously enough, but was firm. "Sorry," said she. "I think it would be all right; but, you see, I have instructions that would not permit it! But if you will tell me your name, I know Mr. Bardell will see you in a very little while. He is busy now."

Blue did not like to have his little whim blocked by this girl. "My good friend," said he, smiling, "Mr. Bardell and I were college chums. I am Rev. D. Preston Blue, pastor of the Broad Street Church of Middlepoint. Don't you believe you could strain a point and let me go into Mr. Bardell's office unannounced?" She returned his smile, and shook her head, roguishly. That was sufficient. The preacher fumbled

in his card-case, produced his credential, with a deep breath that plainly said, "Oh, well—what else can one expect?"—and accepted a chair in the reception-office graciously tendered him by the clerk.

It was a somewhat different experience than he had anticipated. The very idea—a man boxing himself in this way, and barricading himself against the intrusion of an old friend! Yet—it wasn't a bad thing, after all, he reflected. How many a morning had been broken up for him by some agent for life insurance, gold bricks, oil stock, submerged real estate, and sundry other schemes, good enough and bad enough, just because he had been foolish enough to reply, over the telephone, "Why, yes, I can see you, I think, for a little while. Yes? You are an old friend of my brother? That's very pleasant to know! Surely—come right out!"

Why, anybody could get to D. Preston Blue at any time of the day or night. At his office—it was beyond all thought that he could refuse to see a caller. Indeed, it was almost impossible to hold a quiet interview. Other people would come jumping in, as if they owned the place. He couldn't admonish them to wait until

he had finished with his caller. It might offend them. Oh, well—men in business could order their programs differently. It was quite another proposition—business was, anyone could see that.

Absently, he fell to leafing some of the literature on the table; stacks of beautiful specimens of the printer's art, all certifying to the superiority of the Bardell Dredge. He took up a handsome booklet bearing the caption, "TO OUR GUESTS," opened it, and read, on the first page, a reproduction of Jimmie's own distinctive penmanship, the following:

"TO OUR GUESTS"

You wish to go through our plant? That is as it ought to be. You are heartily welcome. We have no guides. We used to have them. But they were too talky. The only guide we ever employed who had sense enough to listen to other people, while they talked, became too expensive to waste on a job like that, so we made him manager of the Sales Force.

Kindly show yourself through the works. You will do this at your own risk, of course. Please be very careful where you put your fingers. All machinery is dirty, and some machin-

ery is dangerous. Keep your coat or skirt clear of belts and gears. Don't get too close to dynamos or blast furnaces!

Stay as long as you like. Ask all the questions that occur to you. Be free to offer suggestions. Talk to the workmen, if you wish. Greet them pleasantly, as you would nod to a business man's associates in his office. This is not a penitentiary. Ask them why they do this that way instead of some other way. Tell them why you asked the question.

The less you know about our game, the more anxious we are to have you tell us how you think it ought to be played. Thank you for calling. Come again. If you have anything to dredge, ask for an appointment, and somebody will talk to you about it. If you haven't, look around, see it all, and—believe us to be

Cordially yours,

THE BARDELL MANUFACTURING COMPANY.

"Humph!" grunted Blue, mystifiedly. "Humph—queer! 'The less you know about our game, the more anxious we are to have you tell us how you think it ought to be played.' Humph!—funny!"

At this, the young woman with the bright

smile and the strong convictions approached and said, "You may see Mr. Bardell, now." Jimmie had come to the door, with arms outstretched, and a smile that surely abolished all the years since they had met. There was much pounding each other on the shoulders, and eager questions that meant nothing and were unanswered, and Dan Blue was pushed into a big mahogany chair directly opposite Jimmie's, with the massive desk between them.

For awhile, the conversation spluttered a good deal. Jimmie was delighted beyond measure that Dan had done him this favor—the very biggest favor anybody could possibly do him—just to come down and see his shop. It was the pride of his life, and he wanted to show it off, to good old Dan Blue more than anybody else in this good old world. And so forth.

"I see you've been soaking yourself with the dredge gospel, while you waited!" laughed Bardell, pointing to the brochure which Blue still clutched in his fingers.

Dan tossed the booklet on the desk, saying, "That's an outrageous way to jolly your visitors, though,—all that bunkem about 'inviting suggestions.' It sounds cordial enough;

but you know perfectly well, you old fraud, that if anybody from the outside should commit the impertinence of offering a suggestion to you about your business you would have him taken up by the back of his belt and thrown out into the road!"

Jimmie's smile was gradually replaced with an expression of gravity. He pointed a very capable index-finger at his friend and replied, "Now that's where you don't know anything again! No, sir; it isn't a mere bit of jollying, at all, at all! Why, some of the most valuable hints we have ever received were offered us by people who actually didn't know a drill-chuck from—from a—a woodchuck, and who may have supposed that a worm-gear was some kind of a garden pest.

"You see, Dan," continued Jimmie, warming to his argument, greatly to the preacher's delight, for he was rapidly reconstructing the fire-eating, enthusiastic, effervescent Jimmie of the old days,—"You see, Dan, the man who has his whole attention glued to the minute details of his work gets so shackled to it that his whole viewpoint becomes microscopic. The reason the kids in school cannot find the names of the continents, when they have no difficulty

locating the names of cities, is not because the names of the continents are too small—but too large—to be seen! So, this man, who does just one thing, is apt to miss a very important point in his work that some other fellow, just passing by, sees at a glance. No, sir; when it comes to bright, clean, spiffy, new ideas, commend me to the chap who surveys the situation without having to climb over a lot of old vocational traditions and inherited prejudices of the craft before he arrives at the main issue!"

Blue made no effort to conceal his frank amusement and unbelief, partly because he thought the notion wholly untenable; mostly because he wanted to keep Jimmie going. It was so like old times. He thought he had better step on Jimmie's starting-pedal again, now that he had come to the end of a sentence.

"Do you think this applies to other lines of business than your own?" he asked, as seriously as possible.

"Haven't the slightest doubt of it—though I had never thought much about it, I confess."

"Mine—for example?"

"How's that—yours? Oh, yes; to be sure—you might call yours a business, I suppose. You do think of it that way, don't you?" He

was thoughtfully silent for an instant, and continued, "Um—well, yes, I should think so." Jimmie rubbed his forehead, lightly, with his finger-tips, as if this might be a debatable matter. Then, brightening, he added, "Now, you preachers are in the habit of holding frequent conferences, aren't you?"

Dan Blue admitted that the members of his profession were certainly strong on conferences. It was their best "holt," he said, reverting to a pet colloquialism of Jimmie's own.

"Well, now," said Bardell, pursing his lips and dismissing the subject with both hands,—an old trick of Jimmie's when he wasn't a bit sure what he was talking about—"Well, now, just suppose you parsons were to call in somebody from the outside—somebody who had never thought of having his wretched soul saved—didn't know he had one—and who hadn't put his head inside a church for so long he had forgotten everything he ever knew about it—well, perhaps he could give you some good suggestions." He closed the sentence with a broad grin, but noting how wide were Blue's eyes, he rubbed his nose, meditatively, and murmured, half to himself, "Darned if I don't believe that! Sounds reasonable!"

Dan shook himself loose from his abstraction, laughed merrily, and retorted, "Ah—I shall know exactly where to come when we decide to summon assistance from the outside!"

Bardell chuckled.

"I don't suppose you're very regular, eh, Jimmie?"

The big fellow in the gray tweeds shook his head slowly, then replied, "Dan, I guess I haven't been inside a church for three years!" He seemed quite serious.

"What's the trouble, Jimmie?" asked Blue, gently.

"Oh—" The dredge-maker pushed back his chair, rose, dug his hands into his trouser-pockets, took a turn up and down the room, sat down again, and said, "It's a long story. You wouldn't be interested. Besides, we're going to have a good time—you and I. Let's not annoy each other with our problems!"

"Problems?" Blue echoed the word. Church —a problem to Jimmie—to old care-free Jimmie. "Problems? Now, see here, old boy, I can't let it rest that way, you know, any more than you could be put off if you found me helplessly tinkering with a broken dredge. Go on,

and tell me all about it! Interested? Why—that's my—my line, man!"

Bardell folded his arms on the desk, and looked his old friend squarely in the eyes. "Very well, if you will have it, I'll tell you. I suppose you and I can afford to have a serious moment—now that we're forty." He took up his telephone, in response to a short signal of a buzzer, and Blue heard both ends of the conversation.

"Yes?"—shortly and crisply from Bardell.

"Mr. Hamilton of Toronto to see you."—muffled tones of the firm young lady.

"Tell him I am engaged. Sorry. Can't see him before two-thirty."

A pause.

"Says he can't wait."

"Well—that's his affair. I am not to be disturbed this morning."

He tossed the receiver back on the hook, and faced his friend again as before.

"Jimmie," Blue expostulated, "you must not let my intrusion here interfere with your business. I can easily amuse myself for awhile if you wish to see this man."

"No!" responded Bardell, roughly. "There's nothing in the world more important to me, at

this moment, than the business in hand! I'm going to tell you my story. Dan, I do a whole lot more thinking about The Church than you might suppose. I am not identified with it, in any way, shape or manner—except that I do make a little annual subscription to my mother's church here—just a modest check for about the same amount as my annual dues at my least expensive Golf Club. Even at that, the minister congratulated me, not long ago, for making the largest single subscription to the work of his church. It made me laugh. I asked him how some of the other contributions ran. He told me. Some of those fellows were giving annually to the church the price of one good automobile tire—some of the wheel-horses, too!

"But, that's all I do for The Church. Yet, I am profoundly interested, and gravely concerned about The Church. I believe, and have believed ever since I became interested in this subject, at all, that The Church has possibilities—tremendous possibilities—but—but no—but no *probabilities!*"

"No 'probabilities'?" Blue echoed, in bewilderment, "Perhaps I don't follow you, Jimmie. What do you mean?"

"Well—'probabilities' may be not just the word I want. I mean, I believe that it would be quite within the range of possibility for The Church to achieve great leadership in human affairs, and exercise a commanding influence upon the public mind—particularly now when spiritual leadership is so urgently sought and so sorely lacking; but I fear it is highly improbable that The Church will achieve it!"

Dan hitched about in his chair, nervously, and flushed slightly. His old chum had encroached upon the territory where he had founded his most darling hopes. His voice was a bit shaky as he replied, "Would you object to telling me what you think hinders The Church from exercising a commanding influence, Jimmie? For if there's anything that I have insisted upon, in my preaching, it is my firm belief that The Church is divinely commissioned to lead in great, constructive movements. And—so far as I can see—she does lead in them too! Not only now—but always! What's bigger? Name something that has a larger capacity for service! I wish you would say exactly what, in your opinion, detains The Church from this leadership—for I have been going on the principle that she has it!"

Blue had grown more animated as he proceeded. There had come just a trace of indignation into his tone.

Jimmie answered, quickly, "Now, Dan, just because you have had the goodness to bark at me, that way, I'm going to tell you—straight! I want you to know that this will be the first time I have ever discussed this matter outside my own home, and even there I have been much more guarded than I am going to be now. It has always seemed so useless to talk to anybody about it. But I have a notion you will see my point."

Dan had quite recovered his poise, and smiled. "Go right to it, Jimmie!" said he, banteringly, "I guess I can stand it if you can."

"Possibly I can explain what I meant—about The Church not having—probabilities—by reporting a recent experience. A few nights ago, Madge and I went over to our neighbors, the the Cranstons', to play bridge. We have known the Cranstons for twenty years. Finest ever—too. Want you to meet them. Well—upon entering their cosy little living-room, I noticed a strip of some cheap textile lying across the table. It appeared to be a sort of cross between an umbrella-cover and a highly magnified

book-mark. I said to Mrs. Cranston, 'Clara, what is this thing?'

"She took it up, handed it to me, and replied, 'Oh—that? Why, it's for our church, you know! The women of the church are expected to raise a thousand dollars, this year; and we are all divided up into groups to earn the money. any way we can get it. Our chairman saw an advertisement of this scheme. It's called "A Yard of Nickels!" See?'

"She fumbled with the heavy end of the ridiculous thing, counting—'I have four—six—nine—*eleven* nickels, already! Isn't that fine? You see,'—she explained, playfully,—'I leave it right here on my table, and whenever anyone asks me what it is—and of course everyone does—I tell them all about it, just as I am telling you. Then, there is nothing for the guest to do but deposit a nickel! Don't you think it is a charming idea?'

"I dug down and brought up some small change. I tried to smile over it and play up to the little farce which Clara seemed bent on making of the event. I happened to have two nickels. I thrust them into the gaping end of the tape; and then my disgust got the better of me, and I'm afraid I said something that

might better have been omitted." He paused.

"Go on, Jimmie!" said Blue, thickly.

"I said—Well, you see, Dan, it's this way. Although I am not a church man, I have always felt a great deal of admiration for that resourceful young fellow who stood up and told the conceited rascals who grafted on his countrymen in the name of religion that they were —exactly what they were! It took courage to do that! I've always admired the fearless way in which he stuck for his ideals. And when they told him that they would get him if he didn't stop interfering with their ancient game of pulling the wool over the eyes of the public —and he went right on, paying no attention whatever to their threats—knowing, all the time, that he was just counting days until they would hatch some scheme to do him in—and the way he met his death when finally they had decided to kill him—"

Blue found himself thrilling under the impassioned words; but knew far better than to break the silence when, for just a moment, Bardell paused with the slightest suggestion of huskiness in his voice.

"—and not whining or whimpering, either! Hero stuff—it was! Big! Beyond-understand-

ingly big!—his courage, that day! Didn't he say to the people who sobbed over the pitifulness of it all, 'You need not weep for me!'?

"Well, as I was saying—although I'm no church man, it stirs me to red fury whenever anybody tries to belittle that young man! And I don't discriminate much between contempt that is hurled at him from the street-loafer or from the meeting-house. I'm everlastingly down on all things that have a tendency to cast reproach upon the life and the cause of that unafraid man!

"Take it around my shops, for instance—I suppose I'm rather over-sensitive about it. I have been ragged a good deal by my associates about it. The boys say 'the old man' is queer, sometimes. Now—I don't mind rough talk. I'm used to it. I have spent a great many years now close to people who bear very heavy burdens, and smell of sweat, and eat with their knives. You can't expect too much of them—indeed, you can't—and I don't want to be too hard on them. I know what many of these chaps are up against, and I don't blame them for a little explosive language, now and then. But, Dan, there's one word that nobody ever kicks around, in my plant—and they all know

it, out there—and many a good man that we couldn't afford to lose has been asked to step to the cashier's window and get his time and his pay, just because he forgot the rule about the forbidden word. Well—*that word is his name!*"

The preacher was unable to resist an exclamation of sincere approval. But his friend apparently did not wish to be applauded. He raised his hand in a mute protest, and went on.

"I am making too long a story of this. I deposited my coins in the limp rag, and said, 'Clara, I hereby make this modest tender of two nickels to your church, and if it is true that this goes to support the cause of The Master, I also hereby beg his pardon for being party to the insult. But, Clara, I am so firm in the belief that he would have neither part nor lot with an institution that attempted to propagate his principles by any such tactics as this, that I think we are entirely safe. But, really, it must make him very sorry—panhandling nickels from the neighbors to honor him!'

"Well, Mrs. Cranston laughed nervously, and there was a tense moment when we all felt unthinkably awkward. I inwardly rebuked

myself for my impudence. Cranston saved the day by changing the subject, abruptly, and the incident was quickly forgotten. But, Dan, that is exactly what I mean when I say that it is an improbability that The Church, under prevailing conditions, can achieve anything even remotely resembling a commanding influence! Institutions that command, command! They do not beg! They do not pauperize themselves! They do not resort to such catch-penny tricks to sustain themselves! They do not get down on all fours and beseech the public for an alms, like a mendicant! No, sir! You ask me to offer some suggestions from the outside relative to The Church. I think I can sum up all I have to say on that subject under the name of that abominable thing that lies on Clara Cranston's table, at this moment,—'A Yard of Nickels!'—that's what ails The Church!" Jimmie Bardell brought two huge fists down hard upon the desk, as he shouted the final phrase. Blue made as if to speak, but his friend was not through. He waived the interruption aside with an imperative gesture.

"Oh, I know exactly what you are going to say, Dan,—that you deplore such tactics, and that they ought to be stopped. But, this isn't

all. Maybe you can abolish the yard of nickels; though I doubt it. I am willing to admit that this is an extreme case—possibly a little more disgustingly spectacular than most of the claptrap devices used to belittle The Church in the estimation of the public; but it is just one expression of the state of mind which the churches have encouraged, for years. To the best of my knowledge, all of the churches are practicing mendicancy! There may be churches of which this is not true. I hope so. I do not happen to know about them. All the churches of my acquaintance are beggars! And beggars do not command! The beggar can collect his daily bread. He can call out a great deal of pity and sympathy and whole-souled charity, which undoubtedly benefits the donors. For society is much better off for having some dependents to support. There is a lot of spiritual culture to be had through hand-to-hand contacts with the needy. Personally—I get some of my best fun that way. But I don't expect these poor things to exercise a commanding influence over me, or anyone else. It's flat against nature and sense that this could be the case.

"Now, just so long as The Church wants the

public to consider her as a dependent, she will live a dependent life. She will have to content herself with that position in the natural scheme of things. She can do a little work, and attract the interest of certain persons who have become used to-such procedure, so that they don't mind it, any more. She can conduct successful rummage sales, profitable bazaars, and collect yards and rods and miles of nickels —but she cannot stand up and speak to the world in a tone that will make it imperative for the world to listen—just because—beggars do not speak imperatively, and the whole world knows it!"

There was a long silence. Bardell had been pacing the floor again, with his masterful hands clasped so tightly behind him that they were mottled. Blue waited for a full minute before he could trust his voice.

"Jimmie," he said, hoarsely, "Love is a beggar!"

The big fellow drew up shortly before the preacher, and gazed at him steadily, for a moment, deep in thought. Then he replied, just as gently as his friend had spoken, "No, Dan. Love is a suitor; but not a mendicant. And they who answer the call of Love, give of

their best. They do not make a farce of it!"

"Well—have your own way about the terms," said Blue. "We won't quarrel with the dictionary. Let's get back to cases. A moment ago, you were saying that The Church is a beggar—and mentioned rummage sales in the same breath. Now, I freely admit that a rummage-sale is not the most dignified market on earth, and if I had my way there would be no such thing, forever and aye; but, strictly speaking, is The Church a beggar when it conducts a sale—even though it is a—a rummage-sale? There's value received, you know. I suppose many a poor family has considered the rummage-sale a great assistance."

"I guess you're right, there, Dan," Bardell admitted. " 'Beggar' is not the word to use in that connection. Second-hand store—how's that? Junk shop. Like that any better? 'Friends please take note,' says the minister, in the announcements, 'On Thursday and Friday afternoons, from two to five,—our celebrated semi-annual rummage-sale. Look in your attics and see what you have. Anything can be used—anything.' " The manufacturer was perspiring.

"That's it!" he continued. "That's the secret

of the whole trouble. Bring anything! Dig in your attics! Rummage in your cellars! Find anything! We don't care what it is! We're beggars! We're used to it! We like it! That's our way!" He was fairly shouting his detached phrases. "Old hats, caps, boots, shoes, parasols, perambulators; or, what have you? Bring all your old trash, and we'll sell it to the poor and give the proceeds to the Lord! Maybe we can make enough money, that way, to defray the expenses of people who have gone to foreign countries to tell the heathen what a great thing it is to have found the truth! No, sir! No, sir! By all that's holy and decent in this sin-cursed world, I know that's not the way! A 'commanding influence'—indeed! 'Commanding influence'—Faugh! Piffle!"

And then Jimmie Bardell realized that he had gone too far. Even an old friendship which was good for many hard knocks and had stood up under many fast and furious debates, could hardly be expected to weather such a gale.

"Do forgive me, old man," he begged, clutching Blue by the elbows, "I've been abominably rude. You see, I have had all this bottled up

in me for a very long time. I simply had to tell you! You will forget—won't you, Dan?"

"No," said Blue, hoarsely, "I don't think so! I don't want to! What you have been saying is true!"

They put on their hats, and made a tour of the works, watching the process of dredge-making. Jimmie explained every detail of the construction with the delight of a small boy exhibiting a new toy. Then they went down town to the City Club to luncheon, where they were to meet Dr. Tracy. "You'll like him, Dan! Great chap! Regular feller! Great surgeon, too! Knows a lot about cancer! Got a notion that he wanted to prove that cancer wasn't contagious, here, awhile ago! Cut a slit in his left arm, during an operation, and sewed in a chunk of cancerous tissue, and wore it for a week!"

"Foolhardy—I should call that!" exclaimed Blue.

"Yep! That's right!" said Bardell, stepping on the accelerator. "Fool—all right! No doubt about that! 'Fool for Christ's sake!' Eh, Dan?"

Blue flushed, slightly, and said he guessed so.

In a moment they were coming out of the

elevator, in the City Club. "Ah—there he is! Come on! Dave, here's where two good ones happened to bump into each other, once! Dan, this is what ran all the undertakers out of our town! Shake! By Jove, I'm glad to have had the honor of performing this ceremony! Gentlemen, be seated!"

III

A SHORT COURSE IN PSYCHOLOGY

BARRING the very faintest suggestion of iodoform—for he had come directly from the hospital—there was nothing about David Tracy that hinted of his business. He exhibited no professional mannerisms. A shrewd observer, asked to guess this man's occupation, might have classified him as an artist. There was something fine about Tracy, a certain sensitiveness that made an instant appeal to the preacher.

Blue liked the surgeon. He liked him first for this complete freedom from vocational affectations; for Blue, himself, had kept spotlessly clear of the professional peculiarities which, he observed, instantly identified so large a per cent of his colleagues. He had a distaste for the orotund tone in conversation that seemed forever to be saying, "So constantly am I obliged to address vast audiences that it is no longer possible for me to reduce my voice to the modest register of the private citizen."

He disliked the "ministerial hand-grasp" that had in it the suggestion of a conferment of grace. He had prayed to be delivered from the "ministerial smile"—that curious combination of suppliance, sycophancy and vanity.

It was very good for D. Preston Blue that he entertained such convictions on that subject, too; else Dr. Tracy would not have warmed to the preacher as he did, unreservedly, upon being introduced to him in the dining-room of the City Club.

Simultaneously with the arrival of dessert, a messenger had summoned Bardell to the telephone, from which he returned, after ten minutes, quite obviously disturbed in mind, begging to be excused. Important business made it imperative that he return to his office at once. Doubtless his friends would be able to amuse themselves in his absence. He would see them later.

The conversation between the surgeon and the minister had toyed with current topics—politics, labor conditions, general economics, and had drifted toward their own vocational interests. They arose and carried the discussion over to a sequestered corner of the club lounge. Blue had been asking about the latest

developments in surgery, and Tracy had been encouraged to an animated recital of recent achievements in his field.

"Our chief task, though," Tracy was saying, "is to give Nature a chance to undertake her own repairs. Mostly, when we fail, it is because we have ignorantly or accidentally blocked Nature in her efforts at restoration. She is on our side: there is no doubt of that; though sometimes, I fear, we are not on hers."

Blue smiled. "Evidently you surgeons esteem Nature much more highly than we do who are engaged in the cure of souls," said he. "Our business is to overcome Nature, you know."

"I wonder if it is," Tracy replied, thoughtfully.

"No doubt of it," asserted Blue, with prompt conviction. "'The carnal mind is enmity against God!' That's our first thesis."

"'Carnal?'"

"Yes—meaning 'natural.'"

"But your first postulate, in religion, is that there must be a God because all men everywhere concede Him. Isn't that an attribute of the natural mind?"

Blue began to wish for shoal water where the wading would be better. Two steps had

taken him in over his head. He merely nodded, and signed for his new friend to proceed. Tracy went on.

"Of course, I know very little about your problems. But, if it is true that normal humanity longs for some elevation of life, one would think that your best service could be rendered at the point of giving Nature a chance, just as we do who are interested chiefly in the repair of the body." Blue remained studious, and Tracy continued.

"Your problem, like ours, would be much more simple if you had two minds to deal with—a natural and a spiritual. You could then strive to reduce the natural mind to a minimum; thwart it, at every turn; baffle it, until it ceased to be a menace; meanwhile encouraging the spiritual mind to higher achievements. We deal with the same complex. The same arterial system that carries toxins, also carries potential health. Now, if there were two systems of circulation—one bent on rendering good service, and the other disposed to be unfriendly to the best interests of the body —our problem would be quite simple. We would proceed to nullify the destructive forces and hearten the constructive forces. But this

is not true. We deal with a very intricate problem."

Blue faced the surgeon squarely with the question, "Are you meaning to insist that the cure of souls must proceed with the same logic that you apply to surgery?"

Tracy offered a gesture of protest. "Really, Mr. Blue, that matter is quite off my beat. But, now that we are talking about the similarity of our professions, suppose we consider a concrete case. I have, let us say, a patient at Grace Hospital, under treatment for cancer. That will be a good example. Cancer is so frequently recurrent. Some consider it hereditary; some think it contagious; some ascribe it to accidental causes. And nobody knows, certainly, very much about it. So it will do quite nicely as a figure. You have a party that makes moral defections a matter of inheritance, and another that accounts for sins on the ground of contaminating influences, and others insisting that accidental circumstances call them out. Very well. I am treating a case of incipient cancer. First, I treat the patient's mind."

"Mind?" echoed Blue, with amazement.

"Yes, I treat his mind. I do not attempt to

withhold from him the exact nature of his malady, else he might be inclined to make light of it and refuse to submit to an operation. But I give him the assurance that he may expect recovery. I also instruct him that the chances of his recovery are greatly enhanced by his willingness and ability to believe that, when I have operated on him, he is going to get well. I tell him that the probabilities of a recurrence are materially reduced if he persuades himself that he is whole again."

"And is that true?" asked the preacher. "Does worry induce a recurrence?"

"Only to this extent—that worry over a probable recurrence interferes with the kind of a convalescence we wish him to have. Assuming that he still has the potentiality of cancer in his system, he may better counteract that tendency if Nature is given her full opportunity to maintain a balance of power over it. Well; we operate. All the broken and diseased tissues are carefully dissected out. Indeed, we do no guessing, at this point. The tissue that is under suspicion is condemned. Every debate about tissue is decided in the negative. Then begins the convalescence. We insist that the patient must have fresh air, sunlight, con-

genial companions, a nourishing diet—everything that will aid Nature, the same old Nature that had been a party to his getting into this trouble. Now, is your treatment of souls much different?"

D. Preston Blue was somewhat uneasy. It would be difficult to confess that he had not thought exhaustively on this subject. He suspected that his best course was an attempt at playful evasion.

"Ours is a free dispensary, doctor. We have very little access to individual cases. They come, once a week, and we assume that they all need about the same medicine." Blue chuckled over his analogy.

"I am not in favor of free dispensaries," said Tracy, seriously.

"In earnest about that?" asked Blue.

"Yes. Very much so. You see, the patient who makes no investment, whatsoever, values his treatment at its exact cost to him, which is nothing! Of course, it is highly necessary that the price shall not be prohibitive; but the fee, nevertheless, is a distinct factor in therapeutics. I always dislike to treat a case where the patient knows he is to pay nothing for his treatment."

Blue welcomed this new avenue for the conversation to proceed into a less troublesome quarter. He urged the doctor to elucidate his theory further, and expressed the doubt that his own value to people's spiritual welfare depended upon such conditions. Dr. Tracy seemed reluctant to discuss that point.

"I have often wondered," he said, slowly, "whether our churches were not somewhat at fault in the psychology they practice. In my profession, it is entirely necessary that I assume command of my patient's case if I am to help him. His prejudices are in my favor, usually, when he comes to me for examination. My first task is to increase his faith in my judgment of his case. Not infrequently, a close friend comes to my office for professional advice. He attempts a little jest, but I fail to follow his mood. I order him to take off his coat. I approach him with a stethoscope, and listen to his heart. He wants me to believe that he thinks it is funny. He tries persiflage, partly to demonstrate that he is quite the master of himself. I will not have it so. 'Say "Ah!" ' I command. He says it, with a suspicion of chuckle in his tone. I gouge him in the ribs with my thumb, and repeat my command some-

what more peremptorily, 'Say "Ah!" ' And keep on saying it, at three-second intervals, until I tell you to stop!' He begins, grinning. I am to be informed that he is amused. By the ninth 'Ah,' he is settling down to business. He pauses. I tell him, paternally, gently, to go right ahead with his part of the program. He does so. He begins to feel like a fool. I transfer my instrument to his back—between his shoulder-blades—and he 'Ahs' some more. I tell him to sit down. I say it in a very indifferent manner, in a tone that plainly says, 'This is exactly the way I tell anybody and everybody to sit down after I have heard all the "Ah-ing" that I desire. You are no more to me than anyone else!' I clamp a blood-pressure instrument to his upper arm, and go into an outer office to attend to other business, leaving him alone for five minutes. He spends it gazing curiously at the glass cabinets full of glittering mysteries that he knows I am master of. When I come back, I give him a genuine smile of friendly encouragement; for he is in a very pensive mood. Now, I can help him, maybe. I can advise him with a feeling of confidence that he will give heed to what I am saying. In other words, I must speak with authority!"

"And not as the scribes!" quoted Blue, with a smile.

"Exactly!" said Tracy. "And now that you've mentioned that case, it has often seemed to me to be very peculiar that his methods are not followed with more fidelity. Indeed, I am inclined to believe that my vocation has taken more advantage of his psychological processes than your own."

"In what respect?" inquired Blue.

"Well, we wouldn't think of button-holing a chance acquaintance, for example, and urging him to come around to the office, some day, for treatment. First of all, our professional ethics would not permit of it. But, if it did, we could do very little for a patient who was under the unfortunate impression that he had conferred a favor upon us by this grant of his patronage. No. He must make an appointment, on his own initiative. If we can put him to some slight inconvenience as to the hour of that appointment, so much the better for his health."

"Do you mean to imply that this was the Lord's way of dealing with the public?" queried Blue, mystifiedly.

"Yes. Somewhat like that. I recall—you will correct me if I am in error—that upon his

being introduced to a group of people—quite a crowd, it was—two men followed him as he withdrew. Presently, he noticed them trailing him, and he turned and said, 'Well, what is it?' They asked him where he lived. I fancy that according to our best modern methods he should have sat down there with them, and, having felicitated them upon the wisdom of their course in expressing some interest in his cause, discussed the whole problem of the world's redemption in general and theirs in particular. But he would not have it so. He replied, 'Come and see.' They followed along, entered his house with him, and stayed until late in the afternoon.

"Next day," continued Tracy, "the two came back and brought another whom they introduced as Simon. 'Ah, your name is Simon! It is a good name. So glad to meet you. It is an honor to have you here. Now which Simon are you? The son of Jonas? Indeed! Well, isn't that fine? Who would have thought that you two could induce Simon to come here to see me. I am very greatly indebted to you both!' Was there any of that? Not at all. He merely said, 'Simon? I shall call you Cephas."

Blue made no effort to comment, and the other went on.

"There was Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a person of some consequence. It is unlikely that he would call on the young Galilean without making previous arrangements to see him. One would suppose that so important a public official as Nicodemus might summon the prophet to visit him. Perhaps he did. But it was Nicodemus who made the call, and he made it at night. He opened the interview with a very gracious remark. He was well aware, he said, that he was speaking to a wise man whose authority to teach was beyond dispute. It was quite evident that God was with him. Nicodemus spoke of God and His concerns with an air of confidence. It might be expected that the Galilean would acknowledge this tribute with an expression of gratitude. It might be entirely in order for him to say, 'You do me much credit. It is a distinct pleasure to hear such words from one in your position.' There was none of this, however. The Master seems to have caught at the tone Nicodemus uses when he speaks of God so familiarly, for he replies, 'I say to you that unless a man is born again he cannot see the kingdom

of God!' There was a brief discussion of fundamental problems of life in which the younger man illustrated his principles by an example in physics. Nicodemus looked perplexed and showed that he did not know what the Galilean was talking about, whereupon the latter remarked, 'Are you a ruler among our people—and don't know that?' "

The minister smiled. He was not quite sure whether he approved this easy translation of sacred words. To him, they were to be spoken only in awesome tones. Yet, he said to himself, the doctor surely had interpreted their meaning. He had done no violence to the spirit of them; perhaps the letter of them did not matter so much. He encouraged Tracy to proceed.

"There was the rich young ruler, you know," continued Tracy, meditatively, "Why, if that young man had come to the minister of the church where my children go to Sunday School, and had said that he was ready to take some interest in the institution, I doubt not my good friend Thompson wouldn't give him a chance to finish his sentence—he would be that anxious to close the deal. I regard this as a test case because there was a great deal at stake. It was a very easy thing to tell Simon to give

up everything he owned and come along, for Simon didn't have anything but an old battered boat and a few mended seines. But here was a man who had something to put in. He wanted to know exactly what it would cost him to have eternal life, and was told that it would cost him everything he had. The disciples knew that this was a very heavy contract. They wondered if their Master hadn't gone too far."

"Well, I'll admit he went much farther than we are in the habit of going, today," conceded Blue, with a smile. Tracy nodded.

"But, exactly what would you have us do, now?" asked the preacher.

"It would be mere presumption for me to suggest," Tracy replied. "But it will do us no harm to talk this over. I fear that the whole psychology of our modern church work, especially in the process of recruiting, is fallacious. Isn't it true that the ministers urge people, rather—rather pressingly, to unite with their churches?"

"They do!" said Blue, promptly. "We beg them to come in, and I fear we are not very insistent upon the conditions of membership. In my church, for example, we have quite left off the old system of examining a man as to

his beliefs, before admitting him into the fellowship of the church."

"Well, that latter may be unimportant," said Tracy. "Reverting to the case I cited, awhile ago—the sarcoma—remember? There are, as I remarked, a variety of theories about the cause of cancer. I do not consider it important that my patient should have settled convictions on that subject. Neither is it important that he should know exactly what treatment I propose to employ. Indeed, the less he knows about the details of that matter, the better for him. I should say that all purely speculative and technical considerations should not be permitted to muddle the mind of the man who invokes the aid of religion. But surely it would be of advantage to make certain requirements of him."

"For example—what?" queried Blue.

"If I were doing it," said Tracy, half soliloquizing, "I think I should never ask anybody to unite with the church. I should try to present the advantage of church fellowship, in my public addresses if I were a minister, so that people would understand the significance of membership; but I would let it stop with that. I should do no begging, or soliciting. That would seem

to me to be very poor psychology. There was that case of the enthusiastic young rabbi who, overcome with the desirableness of associating himself with the Galilean, came out of the crowd and shouted, 'I shall follow thee, anywhere!' If that happens to the evangelist, he says, 'Fine, brother, fine! Now is there another? Up there in the balcony—is there another? Thank you! Thank you! That's good! Another? Thank you!' But the Galilean merely says, 'Perhaps you had better think this over, friend. You are excited. Let us talk about it later, when we may do so alone. Follow me anywhere? Are you used to sleeping out of doors?'

"Well—if I were doing it, I think I should prepare an application blank. Nobody would ever come into my church by way of an emotional stampede. He would have to think it over, and come with his application all filled out. I'm not sure but it would be a fine thing to have an application fee—not very large—just enough to serve the psychological requirements of such a case. Ten dollars, say. That application blank would contain a score or more types of Christian service appealing to various temperaments. The applicant would

be required to check the forms of service he expected to render."

Dr. Tracy drew a pad of club stationery from a near-by table, and began making a memorandum, while he talked.

"This part of the application form might include such items as these, to be checked by the candidate:

"Children's hospital. Teaching convalescents subjects taught in the grade schools. How much time per week? State experience.

"Orphans' Home. Inviting children into your home, as week-end guests; taking them riding; reading them stories; providing for their welfare in matters which the institution cannot afford. How much time?

"Home for the Aged. Service similar to that indicated above.

"The Jails. Providing books, newspapers and friendly interest in the inmates under direction and advice of the wardens. State experience. How much time?

"Practical nursing. Under direction of the Visiting Nurses' Association of the city. State experience and amount of time you can pledge.

"Legal aid.

"The educational work of the church. Teach-

ing in the church kindergarten. Primary. Junior. Senior. State experience.

"The choir. State vocal range. Experience. References.

"Dramatics. State experience.

"Boy Scouts. Girl campfire.

"And then," said Tracy, tossing the tablet upon the table, and pocketing his pencil, "I think I should add to that application form something like this: 'I further agree that if my application is passed upon favorably, I shall consider my membership automatically discontinued upon my failure to perform the service I have pledged, if, upon realizing my inability or unwillingnes to perform such service, I fail to report, at once, to the minister of the church, with specific explanations."

At that, Blue laughed outright. Tracy joined him in his merriment, but quickly grew serious again.

"This seems incredible to you, my friend; but I believe that this is precisely what the public is demanding of the churches at this moment—that they make the requirements of church membership more significant. As the matter stands, Dr. Thompson, the minister of the church attended by my family, and rarely by

myself, comes to me and says, 'Dr. Tracy, I want you to join the church!' And I say, 'Thank you! But why should I?' Thompson doesn't know. He says it would be a good influence in the neighborhood—meaning that if I joined possibly someone else might do so—but why should anybody else do so? That is the question! I ask him. He says it is a steadying influence. But how so? There are no requirements of any sort. A little form—very little—to be passed through, by way of induction. After that, nothing! I say that to Thompson, with whom I can talk freely, and he says, 'Ah, Tracy, you don't understand!' And he's entirely right about that. Tracy doesn't understand. He wishes he might!"

"You say you do not attend church much?" asked Blue.

"No; I said I didn't go, very often, to hear Dr. Thompson preach. I do go to church quite frequently. You may be surprised to know that I go, very often, to the Catholic church. You see, I feel a very real need for a chance to worship. One can't do it, so well, in Dr. Thompson's church. I cannot—speaking for myself. There is a certain stately grandeur and awe and veneration in the service of the

Catholics that I cannot find elsewhere. Here is another example, I think, of the poor psychology of the churches. They have failed to study the demand of the normal human soul for a worshipful contact with the Divine. I go to Thompson's church, sometimes, very eager for some spiritual help. I am shown into the church by an usher who greets me very much as he does here at the City Club. He is glad to see me. I am, in a way, his guest. He brings me to a seat. The organist is thundering away on a big 'show piece' that makes a deafening racket. A glare of light suffuses the place. Everywhere about me, people are whispering. There is no more veneration than at the theatre. Presently, the organ is done, and Dr. Thompson arises and says, in that big, jovial way of his—for I love him very much—'Now, let us open our service of worship, on this beautiful sabbath morning, by singing that tuneful song we all love so well, Number two hundred and sixty-four, in the small book, Number one hundred and seventy-five in the large book: I do hope the time will soon come, brethren, when we may all have the large books, and avoid this confusion. They may be had, at the door, as you leave, for one dollar and fifty cents.

Let us all join heartily, then, in singing this hymn, "Let the Lower Lights Be Burning." '

"Now, I don't know how other people's souls are constructed," continued Tracy. "But I know just this much about mine—that sort of thing does not encourage me to worship. Indeed, I fear it rather chafes my soul into a state of—of spiritual nervousness."

"Do you think we would all be better off if we adopted the Catholics' order of service?" asked the preacher.

"Oh, dear, no!" Tracy protested. "I am sure that would not solve the problem, at all. But if the Protestants would plan their services of worship to appeal to the vital needs of every human soul for a reverential approach to the great Mystery, I believe it would be much better, psychologically, than the exercises that pass for worship in most of our churches. Of course, I do not know how it is with you, Dr. Blue. You may have quite a different plan. Possibly your church has recognized this want, and has supplied it!"

Blue replied, slowly, "No, Dr. Tracy, my church has neither supplied nor recognized this want—but it is there! I feel it, myself! I am so glad you have introduced this subject. I

hope we have a chance to talk more about it."

A boy was paging "Dr. Blue." The minister responded, and was asked to the telephone.

"Dan? That you? Dan; I can't get away just yet. Absolutely imperative that I stay here for another hour. Tom comes in at three-forty, on the Central. How would you like to go down and meet him? Good! Look after him. Take him up to the Club. I'll be along after awhile."

The preacher explained to Tracy, who insisted that he had some work to do before evening. He would see them all at dinner.

"Forgive me for pretending such a lot of knowledge about something that affects your own work," said he. "I have wanted to discuss this with a minister for a long time. When we get together, tonight, you tell me what we ought to do, in my business!"

Blue entered the station, from the doctor's big car, with his thoughts in great confusion. It was true—every word of it was true! Had he not been blind? Queer that he could have gone along, for so many years, without noticing these fundamental points of weakness in his work!

"Jimmie is entirely right," he mused. "The outsider can detect things that the insider fails to see. A man can stick too close to his job. Glad I came here. Amounts to a course in practical theology!"

IV

A REDEMPTIVE CHEMICAL

"AS I live—If it isn't old Dan Blue! Well, how's the parson?"

MacGregor, long, lank, near-sighted, and homely in the extreme to any but the affectionate eyes of a sworn friend, peered into the preacher's face and dropped his bags to embrace the well-knit form of his old college chum. "Where's Jim? Is he down with you?"

Blue explained Bardell's necessary absence and took the editor in charge, piloting him to a taxicab.

"Dashed if you don't move about as if you lived in this town, Dan. How long have you been here?" inquired MacGregor, as they sped up-town.

"Just since morning. Spent most of the forenoon out at Jimmie's factory."

"How is old Jim? Full of pep?"

"Up to his eyebrows!"

"Sell you a dredge?"

"No—but he is building a patent muck-raker for you."

"Glad you didn't say 'mud-slinger.' That's one of our editorial functions, too, you know."

A rapid fire of boyish banter, accompanied by much bear-cub demonstration of affection made the trip short to the City Club. In a moment, they were drawing chairs together in the sumptuous library.

"So you're in Middlepoint, eh, Dan?" remarked MacGregor, kindling the ubiquitous pipe, which Blue thought he remembered as one of Tom's properties as a student. He nodded.

"Let's see; how long have you been there: must be a good while for a preacher." Blue told him with the outspread fingers of his hand.

"That so? So long as that? How time flies! I suppose you must have seen a lot of my old friend, Bill Downey. How is he?"

"Downey?" repeated Blue, searching his memory.

"Why, to be sure! Bill Downey! Editor of The Commercial Tribune! Now you don't mean to tell me that you don't know Downey!"

Blue felt his color rising.

"Oh, I have met Mr. Downey, yes. Now that you have mentioned him, I remember hav-

ing seen him, once or twice. And I have talked with him over the telephone. But I can't say that I know him very well. When I get back, I shall be sure to tell him about our visit."

MacGregor drew hard on his pipe, and was studious for some moments before replying.

"Never been in his office, then."

"No—that is, not in the editorial department. You see, I have no errands to take me there."

"Dan," said the editor, inquisitorially, "had it ever occurred to you that, next to human blood, black ink is the most redemptive chemical in the world?"

The preacher laughed, somewhat nervously.

"Every man to his trade, Tom. Really—it delights me to find other people so thoroughly satisfied with their jobs. If you will believe me, I have had a full day of it, listening to orations on the indispensability of certain professions. This morning, I heard Jimmie Bardell. Jimmie is saving the world with dredges. He is making safer navigation. No harbor was fit for a ship to enter until Jimmie fixed it. Not only that, but he is serving as first aid to certain small streams which are of inestimable benefit to—"

"To the congressional pork-barrel!" supplied MacGregor, with a wry smile.

"Precisely! And after Jimmie finishes with me, I am introduced to his doctor friend—a good scout, too, Tom, he is—and the doctor tells me about the importance of his vocation, how he tinkers damaged humanity back into a state of repair. Now, I suppose I am about to learn that the world's salvation depends upon the newspapers."

MacGregor chuckled, amiably, and defended his position.

"It must have occurred to you, parson, that the newspapers of this country are supplying not only the information but the convictions of almost the entire population. Now, a man of your profession ought to concede that any agency, entrusted with a responsiblity like that, deserves favorable mention, at least, among the redemptive activities of the world."

"There is considerable doubt in my mind," said Blue, warmly, "whether the press of this country has very much of the relish of salvation in it. I am quite willing to agree that most people do form their opinions from the press; but that doesn't mean that these opinions are always or often justified!"

MacGregor leaned forward in his chair, and parried this attack with animation.

"Very good!" he exclaimed, in a tone of finality. "Very good! Now, let us see exactly where that leaves you. You have been preaching in Middlepoint for five years. You have only met, casually, the editor of your leading paper. Barely know him. Never once set foot in his office. Never felt that you had any business there. In other words, the newspaper was of no concern to you. Yet you freely admit that its assumptions and attitudes influence the thought of the majority of your people; though you have reasons to suspect that its opinions are questionable. Now, as a moral leader in your town, how do you justify your indifference toward this powerful thing?"

"Well, what could I do, supposing I should concern myself about this matter?" demanded Blue, testily. "What would be the result if I went to your friend Downey, and informed him that I considered his policy in regard to our local school problems, for example, a menace to the best interests of the community? I dare say he would pitch me out of his office!"

"Perhaps he would," MacGregor replied, "Bill's got a temper like a jar of T. N. T., and

you certainly would deserve pitching out if you went at him in the way you describe."

"Possibly you could supply some suggestions, Tom," said Blue, rather stiffly. "I should be glad to know just how your friend Downey's sacred tripod is to be approached—from what direction—and something about the conventional stance the novitiate is expected to—"

"Come, now, none o' that! You're as mean and sarcastic in debate as ever, I see!" MacGregor responded, soothingly. "Now let me tell you something that will be good for your soul. You parsons—every mother's son of you—are neglecting an important part of your ministry when you fail to take the newspapers into account. Some of them are red, and some are yellow. Some ought not to be, at all. But, here they are! Most of them are trying to give their constituencies exactly what they want. Now, what you preachers are all trying to do, I take it, is to influence the public mind to higher and better thinking. There is no greater power being exercised over the public mind than the press. But what do you skypilots do about it? Do you attempt to associate yourselves with editors, and help them see things the way you do? Do you try to

speak to the public through the press? Only about three out of all the preachers I know have the faintest notion of news values or the preparation of readable copy. Doubtless you all have wise and interesting things to say, but they rarely reach the editorial desk in such shape that they can be used."

"What would you have us do? Take a course in journalism? So that when the editor calls up for about two hundred words of a sermon report, we will be able to hand it to him expressed in newspaper style?" Blue was openly ironical now.

"Well, I hadn't thought of going quite so far," said MacGregor, "but now that you have suggested it, I rather think that would be a fine thing to do. Perhaps there might be room somewhere in a theological course for some instruction about the preparation of sermon abtracts for the papers—seeing that the best chance the preachers ever get to address the public is by way of the printed page. Of course, I don't know what they teach in a theological school. Maybe there isn't time for anything of that sort. Just what do they handle in such a school, Dan?"

Blue found himself reviewing his experience

in his theological seminary. Almost nowhere had his instruction even remotely touched his job. Sometimes, as he compared the problems he faced, daily, in his profession, with his alleged preparation for the same under the maternal eye of his theological alma mater, he wondered how she could have contrived to miss the mark with such systematic completeness.

He had been loaded to the gunwales with the history of doctrines which the public apparently cared nothing about; he had been crammed with rules for the manufacture of sermons which, if carefully observed, were guaranteed to stultify any spontaneity likely to shine through the fog of speculative considerations—his homiletic capital; he had been stuffed with dogmatics, apologetics, polemics, hermeneutics, catechetics, homiletics, exegetics, and a host of lesser ics—now happily forgotten. But he could not recall that, during the triennium he had spent in that manner, any member of the faculty had even so much as mentioned the press as a potential agency for the spread of the gospel. Nobody had hinted that the preacher might find, in the daily paper of his home town, an avenue to thousands of non-

church-going people, who surely needed the ministry of the gospel quite as much as the minority, trained to sit in the pews on Sundays to listen to interpretations of that truth which makes men free.

He tried unsuccessfully to recall a single mention of the public press in any of the classroom lectures of his school, and could remember only the solemn, and frequently reiterated warning of good, old Doctor Awfuldry, to the effect that every minister—especially the young one—should beware the seductive temptation to win a place for himself in the public esteem through "newspaper notoriety."

"I say, old wool-gatherer! Listen! I'm talking to you!" exclaimed MacGregor, teasingly jabbing at his friend's knee with his pipe-stem. Heated debates had been one of their most enjoyable sports, in the old days. It was like a return to garrulous youth to have this extremely animated argument with the redoubtable Dan Blue.

"Eh? What? Oh yes; you wanted to know what one studies in a theological school. I was just trying to remember. They are very much improved, these days, Tom. Really—much improved! But, in my time, well—all that we

learned might have been of use to us if we had been called to occupy the professorial chairs of the institution. Perhaps it would have been helpful if we had been taught something useful—like the newspaper business, for example."

"Well, of course, that might have come in handy," agreed MacGregor, refusing to be chaffed, "but even if the preacher doesn't know anything about newspaper style, and has no idea of the preparation of readable matter for the press, surely there's nothing to hinder his stepping into the office of The Commercial Tribune, occasionally, just to chat with the editor and show his interest in an institution that has so much to do with shaping public sentiment."

"I think you're right there, Tom," said Blue, seriously. "I wonder that the idea never occurred to me. It's quite plain enough."

"Your editor," continued MacGregor, "is not insulated against human contacts. He likes the support and approval of influential men. He knows that he is invested with a weighty responsibility. That being true, he should receive some moral backing. He is entitled to the intelligent coöperation of the preacher. When

Downey strikes exactly the right note in an editorial, registering on the side of honor, justice, and morality, he has a right to expect that his good friend, Dan Blue, will call him up and shout, 'Hot stuff! We're all back of you! Keep the good work going!' or drop him a line—not a long-winded homily full of pious platitudes—but a mere, 'Bully work, Bill Downey! More power to your elbow!' "

"Is your friend Downey the sort that would welcome such—such encouragement?" inquired the preacher, hesitatingly.

"Why, to be sure, he is! Any newspaper man is delighted to have the cordial friendship of the representative men of his community! The minister who shows himself to be genuinely interested in the welfare of the paper can easily win his way into the heart of any editor of my acquaintance!"

Dan Blue spent a bad five minutes while his friend was telephoning to Bardell, notifying him of his arrival.

Only once, during his residence in Middlepoint, had The Commercial Tribune asked him for a report of a sermon. He recalled the circumstances clearly. He had preached on the danger of losing a national ideal. Very few

had heard the sermon. He had announced it, in the Saturday column of "church notices," under the title, "The Golden Calf." Perhaps it had not been a very striking theme. He hadn't given the phrasing of his topic much thought. But it was a good sermon. Many people had said so. Somebody had called upon Mr. Downey with the suggestion that the sermon should be printed. It was timely and full of significance. And he had consented, rather gingerly, to furnish the required copy. Mr. Downey had asked for "about five hundred words."

Never again had The Commercial Tribune requested a sermon abstract of the minister of Broad Street Church, and the latter was heartily glad of it, for the sight of his own words, next morning, was sickeningly disappointing.

The introduction to that sermon had cost Blue many hours of hard labor. He had toiled over it until it was flawless; not a tool-mark in sight; smooth, euphonistic; rhetorically sound in wind and limb. Not on any account could he escape the temptation to repeat this introduction in his abstract for the paper.

Of course, the introduction had been historical. It had dealt with the dramatic incident of

Israel's abandonment of the national ideal in the building of the golden calf. To clear the way for that theatrical event, Blue had backed up, a score of years, into the Nile valley, so that he might get a long, running start at the calf story.

When confronted with the necessity of reducing this whole sermon to a scant nine inches of eight-point, instead of jumping into the very ruck of things, and hurling red-hot chunks of his address at the public, in the first paragraph, the only method his inexperience could suggest was to begin with the calf!

Having squandered his precious five hundred words in riotous introduction, there was no space left to say what possible excuse he might have had for mentioning this ancient narrative. He had told the story of Israel's turpitude; but there was nothing in the article—except possibly in the last few lines which only two people in Middlepoint ever reached, the proof-reader and the author—even vaguely suggesting a modern application. So far as he had gone, the editor apparently had found nothing in it to warrant an attractive caption. In fact, he had labeled it, frankly, "The Golden Calf—Dr. Blue Recites Well-Known Biblical

Story—Idol-worship." After such a recommendation, who would read it?

The preacher's pride almost bled to death as he recalled that pathetic attempt of his to speak through the press to his fellow-townsmen. Given a chance to preach to every man in Middlepoint, on Monday—and this was the way he had done it—by rehearsing the moral lapses of another nation, living in another country, and another age, as if he were afraid to approach his own country's mistakes by less than thirty-three hundred years and seven thousand miles! To be sure, that wasn't true of him. Blue remembered that his sermon had been frank and fearless, on Sunday; but he had kept that fact very carefully concealed from the public, next day.

Not much wonder The Commercial Tribune failed to come back for more. One experience of that sort was plenty.

"Tom, I've been thinking about this matter of sermon abstracts for the papers," said Blue, after the editor had reported that he had been talking to Bardell, and that he would be along presently. "How much instruction would a preacher need to put him in the way of composing these things? I am interested."

"Why, the problem is simple enough, old man," replied MacGregor, confidently. "First, you go through your sermon and find the one big idea. Every sermon ought to have at least one big idea in it, I should think. Now, if that idea is big, it will interest almost everybody. If it doesn't, it's not a big idea. Well; let us suppose that you have located that idea in your sermon. All the trimmings and upholstery can be omitted. The bare running-gears of the idea is what you want. Then, you must say that just as quickly, and in as few words as possible—as if you were composing a night letter to be wired. Moreover, you should use short words that everybody understands." He chuckled, reminiscently; and the preacher knew there was a story in prospect.

"There used to be an editor of the old school," MacGregor went on, smiling, "who required his reporters to go out to the composing room, every so often, and set up one of their own stories by hand. Did you ever set type, Dan? No? Too bad. Great education! Ever see anybody set type? Well, you know it is a somewhat laborious process. And so, if a young reporter, full of large words, found himself unable to write down on the level

where most of the subscribers do their thinking, the old man would make him go out and get a 'stick' and set up his own stuff. That always had the desired effect. Whereas he was tempted to speak of 'that domesticated quadruped whose biological ancestry we trace to the eohippus,' he would content himself with saying 'horse.' That's the first thing the newspaper man must learn—to tell his story quickly and in simple language. Just for example—if the reporter wishes to announce to the public that our well-known millionaire, Mr. Croesus, almost cut his head off, last night, while vaulting through his wind-shield, in the course of a collision with a telegraph pole, at the corner of High and Oak, he does not begin his account of the accident by saying, 'Every resident of our city will be shocked and pained to learn that last night, about eleven-thirty, in the midst of a driving rain, which, it will be recalled, began at six and lasted until the wee small hours of the morning, one of our most dearly beloved fellow-citizens, who has done more for this community than any other, and whose philanthropies are the talk of the state, met with a serious misfortune. So frequently do accidents of this sort occur that *The Re-*

dundant hopes early action may be taken by the city fathers to eliminate such risks.' Ah no, my brother; that is not the reporter's way. He hops right to his story and tells it all in the first three lines. Everybody knows, at a glance, exactly what happened to Croesus. If anyone wishes to know how they got him home, how many stitches were required to put his head back on, how Mrs. Croesus feels about it, etc., is it not written further down the column? It is—in all its goriness and ghastliness! The public wishes to know all about that, too. It not only demands its pound of flesh, but insists upon all the blood there is to be had! First, however, it wants very much to know what this confusion is all about.

"And sermons, I take it, are to be reported in the same manner?" hazarded the preacher.

"Somewhat, yes. In principle, yes. Now, what did you preach about, last Sunday, Dan?"

Blue was reflective, for a moment, and replied, "Well, I was talking about the little, incidental deeds of service for which people are more frequently remembered than the larger achievements they had set out to perform. I called it 'The Things for Which We Are Remembered.'"

"Humph! Title too long, Dan. No topic should exceed five words. Why shouldn't you call that 'By-products of a Useful Career?' But the idea is capital! The public would be intensely interested in that. Almost every man has set out to perform some large achievement which he has begun to suspect he will never put across successfully. He will be glad to learn that he may render some incidental service, en route to his doubtful goal. I suppose you cited some interesting cases to illustrate your point?"

"Well, no; I don't believe I used any illustrations. I do not often tell stories in the pulpit," Tom."

"The Lord did, Dan!" said MacGregor, respectfully.

"By parables—yes," agreed Blue.

"They were stories," insisted MacGregor. "And I fancy they were deduced from his own experiences and observations of life. He must have had his eyes open to everything he encountered along the road—men building houses, children at play, farmers plowing, women baking, fishermen casting nets, fruit-growers mulching trees, camels being unloaded to pass a narrow gate, merchants driving bar-

gains, threshers wielding flails, masons laying brick, shepherds tending flocks, jewelers appraising pearls, soldiers on drill. Surely, if it did not undignify the Great Preacher to light up his sermons with illustrations about brooms, crumbs, chaff, pennies, dogs, birds, grass, yeast, mustard-seed and manure, one would think that his latter-day successors could profit by employing these little human-interest facts to illustrate the cardinal principles of right living."

"Why, Tom, you surprise me with your broad information about the Master's sermons. I hardly supposed you took an interest in such matters. You must be something of a Bible student," said Blue, in a tone of sincere approbation.

"That's because I am a newspaper man—that you thought I would be indifferent to the Bible! That's the prevailing impression, I think, that ministers have of my profession. Would it surprise you still more to learn that not only is the Bible on my desk beside the dictionary, but that it is a much thumbed volume in practically every editorial sanctum in the land? Some day, Dan, when you wish to amuse yourself, buy a dozen current issues of

the most influential papers in the country, and go through the editorials, checking each citation from or allusion to the Holy Scriptures. You may find that we consider that Book a very important work of reference."

"Is it possible?" Blue exclaimed. "I had never noticed that!"

"Now, reverting to your sermon of last Sunday: if you were asked for an abstract of it, your first endeavor would be to select the one idea that the casual reader might find of interest. If you could start him off with a little incident—that's what he wants, stories about real people who did these things you are talking about. For instance: I happen to remember a yarn that would have made a telling 'lead' for this pleasant little thought of yours about 'the things for which we are remembered.' Ever hear the story about the old Scotchman who taught us how to make good roads? No? Well, it goes somewhat like this: One John Loudon MacAdam was a very bookish gentleman who had holed himself in to spend his life creating a full history of the MacAdam family, clear back to Adam the First. Indeed, I think he contended that the deletion of the 'Mac' from the first man's name was due

to faulty translation. One day, while he was on this monumental history, he was waited upon by a committee that informed him he must mend the road in front of his estate which his neighbors declared was the worst stretch of highway in all Scotland. Testy because he was required to leave his important literary labors to attend to this minor matter, he decided he would build a road that would shame the roads of all his complaining neighbors. He had all the clay hauled off the highway, and the excavations filled with crushed stone and gravel. It was a good road. Then he went back to his history of the MacAdams and spent the remainder of his days producing his magnum opus. But nobody remembers any other MacAdam but John Louden; and he is remembered not because he wrote a five-foot shelf of ponderous biographies, but because he invented the macadamized road!"

"Fine!" shouted Blue. "Exactly in point!"

"That would have made a good starting-place for your sermon abstract. After you had told this story, briefly, your reader would go on to find out what deductions you had drawn. But, even if he did not, he would have no difficulty seeing the point, instantly. Of course,

there are plenty of good stories bearing on this theme. You know them. There was the chemist who accidentally broke his thermometer in a beaker of very expensive chemicals, ruining the experimental compound. Just on the point of pouring it into the sink, he observed that the stuff was turning blue. It turned out to be the first mess of commercial indigo. That wasn't a bad story, either, about Columbus, who sets out to find a shorter sea-route to Asia, and blunders upon this continent!"

"Tom, you would have made a good homiletician," laughed Blue.

"I am quite content with my trade, Dan," said MacGregor, "but if I were a preacher I think I should adopt a 'homiletic mood,' somewhat like that of the reporter who must always be in a 'reportorial mood.' Positively nothing ever passes before the reporter's eyes that is not examined for its news value. From the fall of a sparrow to the ground, to a four million dollar fire in the heart of the city, every movement in life is regarded as potential news. The difference between a good reporter and a poor one is simply a matter of eyesight! I should think it might be much the same with preach-

ers. People come, on Sundays, to get some new inspiration that will help them live more happily and usefully. If they can be told exactly how other people have experimented with certain principles, either to their own benefit or hurt, I should think it would interest them tremendously. I have observed that the crowds usually gather around a man who has stories to tell about people."

"Crowds? Do you know of very many preachers, Tom, who are surrounded by crowds today?" Blue spoke bitterly.

"Not many—no. But there are enough to point the moral. You speak as if the people of Middlepoint were not very faithful in their church attendance. Don't you have a good audience in your church, Dan?"

"About—one hundred and fifty, on Sunday morning, when the conditions are just right—the weather, you know; and the season."

"How many people would your church accommodate?"

"More than six hundred, it is said."

"Ah—so that is the trouble!" MacGregor had the air of one unearthing a secret. "I can tell, by your tone, that you are discouraged, Dan. Now I know the reason. It is because

you are seeing no results. You would preach like a house afire if you had a congregation! Lacking a congregation, you haven't very much interest in the job—now isn't that so?"

The preacher nodded, affirmatively. MacGregor grew spirited.

"That's exactly what ails the preachers of this country, at the present moment, Dan. Nobody to preach to! Why, I can see the whole problem as clearly as if I were its own mother! The preacher knows that he is going to face a small group of lonesome people, scattered in little squads over a big, three-fourths-empty meeting-house. It will be exactly the same bunch that was there last Sunday—a few less, perhaps, but no more. So—he gets to work on a sermon for that little handful. Not much wonder if he can't put his full energy into it. Yes, sir; I can see how it would be. Take my own case: if I knew, as I sat down to write an editorial, that the edition of *The Star* containing it would be limited to one hundred and fifty copies, I would go at it with utter disinterest. Not that these people wouldn't be worth talking to; but because it would be a confession of complete defeat and collapse if my paper were unable to do a larger business

than that. But when I know that every pen-stroke means something to twenty-five thousand people, I spur my mind to its best endeavor! Now, suppose, Dan, that you knew, to a moral certainly, that you would have a crowd, next Sunday morning—a compact, shoulder-to-shoulder, alert audience—wouldn't you go to your task of sermon preparation with an entirely different attitude than usual?"

Again the preacher silently signed that MacGregor was entirely right in his deductions. The thing was true! As the editor spoke, he had been mentally reviewing the few experiences he had had in crowded churches. No—he had not been in the pulpit! That was an untasted joy. He had found himself in the pew of a crowded church. He recalled the strangely magnetic quality of the audience, its tense attitude of expectancy; how the congregational singing of the hymns seemed to carry a rich overtone almost supernatural in its uplifting power. How vividly the Book poured out its inexhaustible treasures when read to that responsive crowd—a crowd that had been welded into one solid chunk, so that it saw, heard, thought and felt as with the eyes, ears, mind and heart of one man!

And the sermon? Inspired! Nothing less or else than that! Why, he mused, almost anybody could preach under such conditions! The preacher had been fairly lifted up and bowled along on a tidal wave of concentrated interest, flowing from that huge audience! The size of it seemed to lend new significance to his belief that the gospel is, indeed, the light of the world! With the promise of such a congregation, Sunday after Sunday, he too could hurl himself into his task with all the zeal and abandon of a prophet! He knew it!

"Yes, Tom," sighed Blue, "it is the old story of 'which comes first—the hen or the egg?' To get a crowd, a man must know how to preach with great vigor. To preach with great vigor, he must have a crowd. I defy any man to do his best work with a despairing little handful in a vasty tank that is built to hold four or five times as many people! It can't be done! Very well; what is he to do about it? Suppose he decides that a large congregation is the only solution to his problem! How does he go about it to recruit an audience? I'm sure I don't know. I wish I did!"

MacGregor was reproaching himself bitterly for having permitted and encouraged the con-

versation to this unpleasant quarter. Fine way, indeed, to spend an hour with his old friend of college days—to hold up a mirror so that he might see how feeble were his endeavors. Yet, he had a feeling that to change the conversation, now, would mean nothing less than that he considered Dan Blue's case beyond help. No; he had gone into this thing with his eyes open. He must see it through.

"If I were in your place, Dan, I would make an adventure!" His eyes kindled, and his voice grew vibrant. He had come upon an idea, suddenly. He would offer it for what it was worth. "I would decide that on a certain Sunday—say thirty days off—I was going to have a congregation that would pack the place to the roof!"

Blue made an unintelligible noise that sounded like a disdainful chuckle which had turned out to be a cynical growl.

"And how would you proceed—after this interesting decision? Offer a cash reward to anybody who would come, that day?" Blue spoke dishearteningly.

"Well, first, I would line up all my present resources. I would call my congregation into close confidence; explain the situation; tell them I was tired of jogging at the old trot;

assure them it was for the best interests of the church that we find more people; and swear them in to the task of bending every energy to get a large crowd to church on the date agreed upon. Don't you think they would help—if you put it up to them as a serious matter, and asked them to do this for you as a personal favor?"

"That would stimulate some interest—for that one day—yes!"

"Well; that's all we're interested in, now. Just to get a crowd—once! After that—it's up to you! See here, old chap; you've simply got to buck up! I know you! I've heard you speak! I've heard you pour yourself out, many a time, in a way that sent the creeps up and down my spinal column! You've got it in you to be a successful and happy preacher! Give you a crowd—the promise of a crowd—and you would surprise yourself and all your friends in Middlepoint by the sudden release of a volume of unsuspected pulpit power! I know it!"

Blue felt an instinctive tightening of his muscles, a quick intake of breath, a sudden constriction of his throat—as if he had come into possession of a new ideal—a new passion!

"Well—go on!" he commanded, his eyes aflame. "What then?"

"Next, after I had pledged my nucleus to work for me, under contract to bring their friends and neighbors to church, that day, I would take the telephone directory and make a list of every man in the city, not a regular church attendant, who shared my friendship, and see to it that a pressing invitation was extended—for that one Sunday morning. Perhaps you do have a list like that, already compiled." MacGregor paused, as if he expected the preacher to reply.

"No," he said, doggedly, "I never thought of doing that. But it wouldn't be a bad idea. Glad you mentioned it."

"And then," continued MacGregor, enthusiastically, as he set his feet at last on solid ground, "I should advertise in the papers!"

"Not my policy, Tom!" said Blue, shortly.

"You must have a new policy. Your old policy's given you the dumps—worst case of them I ever saw? What's wrong with advertising? You don't have to do it just as you would if you were selling shaving soap or announcing a circus. Do it dignifiedly, but with enough punch to make it effective. Buy a few inches of space, every day for a week preceding the big event. Hint, mysteriously, at

the program. Practice the psychology of the butcher-boy on the train who presents the passengers with a few salted peanuts, and comes around, a moment later, to sell a bagful. Take some live topic for your sermon—something the people are interested in. I suppose there is really no reason why every sermon should not be rigged that way, is there? If the advertising is good, and the rest of the campaign goes forward with earnestness, why should you not have a crowd—the kind that backs up in the lobbies, and has to wait on the front steps until the ushers can make room for them! By Jove—I think I should like to make an adventure like that, myself! I should enjoy the thrill of it immensely. For, after all, the man who stands up before a densely packed throng of people, and projects his personality, has it all over the fellow who sits boxed in a little cage, hammering out his brilliant thoughts on a typewriter. Just once, I should like to have that tug at my heart which must surely come to the man who faces crowds! Dan, I wish I could exchange places with you—and have your gift of speech—and get a chance to say my piece—just once! Man—what an experience it would be!"

Blue drew himself to his feet. He grasped his friend in a clutch that made him wince.

"You've done a lot for me, Tom. This has been a wonderful hour. I doubt if you can realize how much new light you have thrown on my gloomy job. It has been many a day since I have had such an inspiration to plunge into my work with renewed energy!"

Bardell came in at this juncture, like a strong wind. He spluttered excuses, pawed over MacGregor after the manner of an undisciplined collie, and led his friends to the elevator, assuring them that they were all going to have the time of their lives.

As for Blue, there was a new glint in his eye, a new note in his voice, a new joy in his heart. Something was telling him that he had accidentally stumbled upon treasure in the heart of a friend. Secretly he wished he was on the way to the train that would take him back to that task of his—now that it had become transfigured!

Old Dan Blue had got his second wind!

V

CONFIDENCE

IT was the next morning after the birthday dinner. That event had been one of the merriest of the preacher's life, since college days. It was proved, again, at the dinner, that while memory is a very insecure safety-vault for the distressing experiences of youth, it is equipped with time-lock and sunk hinges for the gay and festive frolics of adolescence.

Indeed, it was to be suspected that these latter reminiscences, far from losing weight through the years, had taken on a color and robustness which they did not possess at the hour of their storage in the minds of their possessors.

That which D. Preston Blue had fearfully anticipated—that well-intended, but seriously indicting, inquisition—had failed to become a part of the program. Nobody referred, owlishly, to the fact that forty was a time of invoice. There was not a hint that any member of the party had turned into the back-stretch.

Jimmie Bardell fairly excelled all his former records as a story-teller. Good old Tom MacGregor's persiflage was a delight. Tracy—a casual observer would have said that Tracy had always belonged. He fitted like a glove. It was easy for MacGregor to speak of the quartet as "the forty foursome." And it would have been difficult to find a more thoroughly congenial "foursome," were the search to include every city of the land.

And now it was the next morning after. MacGregor had taken an early train. Dr. Tracy begged permission to drive Blue to the station at ten. Bardell, suspecting Tracy of desiring a moment alone with the preacher, pleaded urgent business at his office, bade his guest an affectionate farewell, and the surgeon set off with Blue on a roundabout course to the railroad.

"I have been thinking considerably about our conversation at the club, Dave," Blue was saying; for, by common consent, the doctor had been accepted into the quartet on terms of delightful intimacy.

"The most I remember about it humiliates me," replied Tracy, smiling, "for I think I did all of the talking, and about matters on

which you are much better posted than myself."

"As Jimmie would say, Dave, 'the fellow who knows nothing about my job is precisely the man to give me advice.' I welcomed it heartily. If I had not, it is improbable that I should attempt to revert to our conversation. The thing that sticks with me is your remark about the importance of 'speaking in a tone of authority.' The more I reflect upon it, the more reasonable it seems!"

"Here is Jim's Orphans' Home; on the right, Dan. It belongs to the city, of course. But most of us prefer to think of it as Jim's because he spends most of his time and money up here. Delightful location, and picturesque grounds—don't you think?" Tracy drove slowly past the handsome structure, and his guest murmured something about the greatness of their friend's heart.

"Yes," said Tracy, "the public positively insists that a few of its functionaries shall speak in a decisive tone. When I stammer, or guess, or suggest three or four possible alternatives which might be deduced from a diagnosis, I have done my patient a serious injury. He wants me to be sure! He is willing that I should take my time to an examination; but,

when I am done with it, he expects me to snap out an answer that defies controversy!"

"And suppose you are not sure, yourself," cautioned Blue.

"Well, if I have any doubts, I keep them to myself, and renew my investigation of the case. I confide to the patient only such opinions as I am able to state in a convincing tone. If I discover that the trouble is out of the field in which I am quite at home, I candidly advise my patient to carry his miseries to some other market. So long as he deals with me, he must have confidence in my treatment; and this confidence depends upon little, incidental circumstances, more often than upon the deeper fundamentals. Take the case of appendicitis, for example. I have diagnosed the case and decided upon an immediate operation. The patient says, 'Doctor, why does the appendix so frequently get into trouble?' I reply, "I do not know.' He is not disappointed because of my lack of knowledge, although this is, I should say, a very pertinent question. He tries me again. 'Doctor, what is the appendix good for, anyway?' I am obliged to reply, 'I do not know!' 'Does anybody know?' he inquires, with brutal candor. I reply, 'I do not know. There are some

theories, I believe. Someone may know. Some one of these theories may be correct.'

"Now, all this does not disturb his confidence in the least. He grins over my confession of ignorance. It is nothing to him whether I know, or do not know, what functions the organ was intended to perform that I have decided to take from him. His confidence is quite preserved. But!—if, while being wheeled into the anæsthetizing chamber, the next morning, he should overhear the anæsthetist say to his assistant, 'What had we better use, here—ether, chloroform, nitrous oxide, or a local of cocaine?'—he begins to be doubtful of the whole institution, lock, stock and barrel! He is afraid of his anæsthetic; afraid of me; afraid of the hospital! I shouldn't want him to catch a fragment of conversation, from the adjacent operating-room, in which I was saying to my chief nurse, 'No; on second thought, I don't believe we will use that scissors. Lay out a smaller one. Never mind—I guess that one will do. Let it be. We will use it!'

"It is possible that no great significance need be attached to any of these remarks that my patient overhears; but they are all bad for his health. They shatter his confidence!"

"I wonder," said Blue, reflectively, "if this isn't just your own cryptic way of saying to me that the public does not lose its confidence in the church because the preacher is unable to speak with the assurance of our forefathers on speculative problems of theology, but that its confidence rests upon other things—what things?"

Tracy chuckled, boyishly.

"Always driving me back to your pasture, aren't you, Dan? Well; let's see if we cannot find an analogy. I was saying to you, yesterday, that my children attend the Sunday school at Dr. Thompson's church. The only idea that my children have of religion is interpreted through Christianity; and their idea of Christianity is that which this particular Sunday school offers. So, it is a very important matter that they regard that institution with confidence and respect. They wish it to speak in a tone of authority. I don't believe they expect that Sunday school to tell them exactly what God looks like. They probably take it for granted that the Sunday school doesn't know, and have more respect for it because it says frankly that it has no ideas on that subject.

"Now, that Sunday school is scheduled to

begin at 9:45. The first and greatest commandment of the small boy is punctuality. He has been taught, in the public school, that tardiness is one of the seven deadlies, and the deadliest of the lot! If he is thirty seconds late, on Monday morning, he is reprimanded, held up to open reproach, penalized! The Sunday school, however, opens for business any time between 9:50 and 10:00.

"Not long ago, I went there, with my little folks. I had promised to walk to the church with them, and they persuaded me to go in. The appointed moment came, but the institution failed to start. The superintendent came back where I was sitting, apologized for the delay and explained it on the ground that the pianist had not yet arrived. While we waited, I expressed an interest in his department of the church, stating my belief that it was highly important for small children to get a correct idea of religion, seeing how lasting was a first impression.

"Mr. Price—a fine fellow; no discount on that—of Price and Fuller, hardware merchants, said he only wished he might be able to invest much more time and thought in his task. Conversation revealed that he had never taught

school; knew nothing of pedagogy, either as to its principles or practice; had no idea of the meaning of the phrase 'child psychology'; and was so utterly out of contact with the public schools of the city that he hadn't heard about the new 'Junior High' which opens presently.

"I considered this a very serious matter. If Dr. Thompson proposes a service of worship, upstairs, that hasn't a single element of worship in it, I dare say the people can get along. They are settled in their habits of thinking. Their beliefs about religion are probably fixed. But my children are still in the process of receiving their early impressions. I dislike to have them misled.

"Well, after a while, the pianist came fluttering in, breathlessly, and went at once to her place at an old, square piano—you know the kind, Dan; dating from the late sixties. I learned, upon inquiry, that one of our very best families had presented it to the Sunday school on the occasion of their acquiring an expensive grand piano for their own parlor; and while everybody knew it was a pity to retain such an instrument for the use of the church, it was feared that the donors would feel aggrieved if their gift was supplanted.

"Perhaps you can tell me what it is in Christianity, as expressed by the churches, that makes people so edgy! I should think there might be room for a sermon, some Sunday, on 'The Touchiness of the Saints!' Why is it that foolish little misunderstandings and silly squabbles which wouldn't be tolerated anywhere else seem to be continually in the air, in most churches—as if the people had ripped all the insulation off their nerves, and threatened to short-circuit and blow up at the slightest touch?

"The pianist took her seat at the funny old piano, and the superintendent announced a hymn—some foolish bit of poor music, set to poorer verse; the infirm instrument tinkled a puny prelude, played indifferently by the dull young woman whose musical education must have been austerely limited; and the institution was in motion—at 9:56.

"I had learned that there were fourteen teachers in the school. Six of them were present when the song began. Three others had reported, later, before I left. I understood that it was quite the usual thing for two or three classes to combine when teachers were absent.

"The superintendent himself led the song with which the school began. Apparently he knows nothing about music. I think he meant it well. I am sure the scholars felt that they were being directed by an unskilled leader. The discipline of the school showed it. Children pinching one another, whispering, tossing books about, apparently on the alert for new methods of giving their indulgent teachers annoyance; less than half of them taking any part in the opening exercises—a condition easily accounted for, I should think, on the ground of untrained leadership, plus their natural contempt for an institution that had no respect for itself.

"My little David is in the kindergarten department. He had requested me to step in there for a moment. I did so. Now, this youngster knows a kindergarten when he sees one, for he attends the kindergarten at the public school every day. The Board of Education has taken considerable pains to equip it with the very latest apparatus. You should see what David works with, on Sundays! Not only is the equipment obsolete, but such as it is has a general out-at-the-elbows appearance; dingy, ragged, broken.

"There was a sand table in which the teacher

had made a topographical map of Palestine. On an adjacent table there was a miniature of the temple. On an easel hung a gaudy picture of Daniel in the den of lions. The walls were covered with similar displays of dramatic incidents from the Old Testament. I suppose these matters deserve treatment. I think, however, that the past was being consulted much more than the present for illustrations of Christianity's reason for being a fact and a force in the world!

"So—the first view that my little tots get of Christianity is exactly what you might imagine. It is entirely too strong to say that they now regard it with contempt; but is not too much to say that they lack that fine confidence in it which I wish might be their early impression."

"I never thought of it—just that way!" Blue announced this in a tone of deep perplexity. "Surely we need to mend matters, at that point! There are very few churches that could plead 'not guilty' to the charge! Mine couldn't—I am sure!" He abruptly reverted to an earlier remark of Tracy's. "Dave—you were speaking of the touchiness of the saints—suggesting a sermon on the subject. Do you, as a psycholo-

gist, have a cure in mind for this awful thing?"

"I suppose that if there was an idea introduced into the church that was of sufficient interest to distract the attention of small groups from their idiotic rackets over insignificant matters, the problem would be solved. When people begin to be quarrelsome, it is because they are dissatisfied, disappointed. If you don't object to my bluntness, I believe the churches get this way because the people in them come to the conclusion that the institution is not 'a going concern'! They spend a great deal of money—or think they do, and the results aren't satisfactory. The bulk of the membership still spends Sunday morning on the road, driving. The general public passes by without pausing to inquire how or what they do who have invested their time and money there!"

"Suppose," said Blue, eagerly, "that the preacher managed, by some hook or crook, to attract a large congregation into the church—and keep it coming, Sunday after Sunday—would that put a stop to the rackets, and ease the disappointment and the dissatisfaction, do you think?"

"To be sure! Why, there would be no room,

in a crowded church, for squabbles| If somebody grew irritated over—oh, anything—he would be unable to stir up much excitement in a crowd. His little grievance would simply be smothered out. The family of Edgewises, habitually on the alert for a scrap, might do a great deal of damage in an unprosperous church by announcing that they proposed to have their own way, or withdraw; but if they belong to a church that is up on its toes, and packed with people, they would be rather reluctant about checking out—conscious that if they did so they would hardly be missed! Yes, my friend; a crowd would do the business! The whole obnoxious scandal of church quarrels would have to stop!"

"Dave, I have come to the conclusion that this is the secret of our lack of success in the churches. The reason the preachers are not speaking more commandingly is because they are discouraged. They are discouraged because they are unable to see satisfactory results from their preaching. They can't preach because they have nobody to preach to. The people make life wretched for them because it is evident that they are unsuccessful. Therefore—the preacher must have a congregation of suffi-

cient size to call out his best energies! I mean to make a bid for a crowd in my church when I go home! I believe that I have a message that is worth hearing, and am representing a cause that is deserving of public attention." Blue was fairly eloquent as he rapped out his decision.

Tracy took his hand from the wheel, and waived it in a careless gesture that meant the debate was closed—the point conceded.

"Well! When any man talks about a resolution in that tone, the matter is settled! You can do this thing! You will do it! I have not been studying men—on the outside and inside—for the last fifteen years without becoming a pretty fair judge of people's ability to do what their will desires. As for you, Dan—your biggest problem is solved when you have set your jaw, in that fine grip that you have on it at this minute, and have dug your nails into your palms until it hurts, and have muttered, under your breath, 'I'll do it!' "

He was a very thoughtful man who entered the train, a few minutes later, en route toward Middlepoint—and the new task.

At the gates, the doctor and the preacher had parted with a strong hand-grip that trans-

mitted a volume of sincere admiration and affection. Blue had left his new friend with the words still tingling in his consciousness, "Dan, I have conceived a tremendous interest in you! You have a very great deal of magnetism! I wish to keep in close contact with you! In other words—I believe in you! Remember that I am entirely confident of your success!"

D. Preston Blue was not enough of a practical psychologist to know that he had been professionally treated by a process of suggestive therapeutics. It is no small matter when a successful man, whose presence radiates complete self-assurance and whose manner compels confidence, grasps a discouraged friend by the hand, looks him squarely in the eyes, and says, "I believe in you!" The words stirred Blue! They squared his shoulders. They tensed his muscles. The trucks repeated them, at every rail-joint. "I believe in you! I believe in you!"

Old Dan Blue was going back with a determined gleam in his eye, his mind fairly throbbing with budding hopes, plans, programs! The old despondency had passed away. He had become a new creature. At fifty miles an hour the train plodded! Luncheon was called, and Dan

Blue didn't hear it. For an hour, he gazed steadfastly out at the window without seeing anything. Then, he covered every envelope and scrap of paper in his pockets with memoranda. Twilight came down. He walked to the diner with the air of a man who had control of large interests. And this was true of him. He had just discovered that his business was the task of a man of affairs!

VI

IN A TONE OF AUTHORITY

IT was not in the whining tone of a beggar that D. Preston Blue announced to the officials of Broad Street Church, gathered about a lunch-table, on the following Monday noon, that he was about to embark upon a new voyage and needed shipmates.

Customarily he was a passive figure at such meetings. The discussion generally centered upon the distressing problems of church finances. With that matter he had had little to do—except worry in private.

He had dreaded such meetings. They were depressing. Nothing much came of them but deep-fetched sighs, and anxious expressions of discouragement and distrust.

Today Blue did the talking. Moreover, he spoke as a man who sees his way clearly. There was a confident smile upon his face.

"Gentlemen," said he, after the dishes had been cleared away, "I have decided that Broad Street Church is amply able to command larger

attention than she has been receiving. We require a larger congregation. As the matter stands, we are working at a disadvantage. Think what it would mean to us all—to you—to me—if our pews were filled! Packed! It is entirely possible. Moreover, it is going to come to pass! The old epoch of struggling along, with feeble interest, small audiences, and general discouragement, is ended! I have certain plans which will bring us, as a church, up on higher ground! I shall tell you what they are, and I am fully confident of your whole-hearted support—for you are just as much interested in this achievement as I am myself!"

An elderly banker glanced across the table at his old friend, the furniture-dealer, pursed his lips, smiled, winked, and jerked his grizzled head in a manner that plainly said, "He's got something! This means business!" And the merchant signaled back, with a grin and a nod, that he, By Gracious, believed the man actually must have a plan. People didn't talk in that tone of voice unless they knew exactly where they were going, and why!

"For five years," continued Blue, "Broad Street Church has contented herself with a mere conservation of her legacy. Occasionally

a new family has moved to Middlepoint, bringing letters of transfer to our congregation. We have accepted them. Periodically, we have received groups of our own young people into church membership. Every Sunday, about one-fourth of our church is occupied by our own people—by one-third of our own people. Now, no man can preach with enthusiasm under such conditions. And until he does preach with enthusiasm he cannot expect to attract larger numbers of people.

"I propose to solve this problem. I have selected a date—the first Sunday of next month—three weeks off—as the day when Broad Street Church is to have her first experience, so far as my dealing with her goes, as the hostess of a large number of guests. That will be the beginning of our progress. From that day on we may expect to build up a permanent constituency that will crowd the church."

There was a spontaneous burst of applause, led by the banker. He was a canny old fellow who knew a good proposition as soon as he heard it stated. He leaned forward, with his elbows on the table, and regarded his minister with fresh interest. His confidence was contagious. Blue had an alert audience.

"It will be necessary, of course, for the present membership of the church to get behind this project without hesitation. I am convinced that the first move is to have a meeting of the fifty men of the congregation who can be depended upon to give this matter their best attention. We will explain the details of the plan to them. They will see its practicability instantly. I propose to meet with a similar group of the women of the church. There will be no doubt of their coöperation. Are you with me?"

"Fine!" "Count on us!" "We'll be there, Dr. Blue!" greeted the preacher from his interested group.

"I knew it!" said Blue, decisively.. He had acquired a new trick of snapping out his words until they had the effect of a whip-crack. They sounded as if they had bubbled off a very hot and energetic mind!

"The workers, who will be sworn in to see this thing through to success, are to be supplied with the names of persons belonging to the church, but rarely in attendance. These persons are to be lined up under contract to attend church on Sunday, the third.

"I shall place in their hands some equipment

which they will find effective in performing this service. The details of that need not concern us this moment. The cost of it will be in the neighborhood of fifty dollars. I should appreciate your voting an appropriation of that amount for this purpose."

The chairman of the board of trustees took his cue promptly.

"Is there a motion?" There was. Was it seconded? It had been, several times. Was there any discussion? There wasn't. The question was demanded. It was not put before the house. The general concert of approval had been too enthusiastic to warrant a vote. And this was exactly the same body that had fretted and fussed and tugged at its whiskers and scratched its ear, time after time, over just such insignificant expenses! Today it was different. Their leader was speaking in a tone of authority. They knew that he knew what he was talking about. They said, "Sure! Go to it!"—as the board of directors of a highly successful business enterprise would acquiesce in the demands of the manager for a new piece of machinery or equipment.

"I am grateful," said Blue, "but not surprised. I had no hesitation about making this

proposal to you, for I was assured of your full approval. Now, that is all—except to arrange for a general meeting of the men of the church. I have selected fifty names. There are ten of you. I think I need not ask, after your hearty support today, whether you will be good enough to be responsible for five men apiece. I suggest that you do this first by personal note, and follow it with a telephone conversation to make sure the matter will not be forgotten. What's the best day?"

They agreed on Thursday at noon—here—luncheon. And adjourned, every man crowding about the minister to squeeze his arm, pat him on the shoulder, wring his hand, and renew their expressions of interest, as they secured their lists of names.

That afternoon, at four, in the parlor of the church, Blue met a picked group of a dozen women—the most loyal and influential of the church. He electrified them with a speech very much better than the one he had made to his men. His confidence was growing. The little audience was hardly content to hear him out. He had made his case early and easily. They agreed to find him a crowd of women on Thursday afternoon.

The third was going to be a big day! He would be preaching a trial sermon. Not to get a job—but to make a job worth doing! He felt a sense of exaltation! It would be easy to preach, on the third. He wanted to express himself in some theme that had a lot of lift to it—and drive—and urge! He had suddenly renewed his strength. He was afire with enthusiasm to put other people into his own frame of mind. Ah—he had it! He had his text! It would fit his mood—exactly. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint."

Nor was it hard to find the exact wording of his theme—now that his heart was aflame with this nascent message. He was going to talk to people who were in shackles! They were doing their work without joy, because their motive wasn't big enough. They were getting nothing out of life, because they had failed to put enough into it. He was going to assume that they were discouraged—as he, himself, had been. He was going to help them to their second wind. So that they could run again and not be tired! So that that they could plod,

and not faint! Some of them had rudimentary wings that had never fledged feathers. They were using them for crutches. He was going to help these people to a new zest, a new grip, a new passion for life—larger life! He decided to call his sermon "Their Second Wind."

Then, he reflected that this seemed a bit—well—a bit sensational. But his face brightened as he recalled that a much better preacher than he—more famous, more successful—had once preached a sermon about a race-course, picturing a crowded arena, athletes straining every nerve to win a prize, having divested themselves of every superfluous ounce of impedimenta. Yes! If it wasn't too undignified for Paul, it was good enough for Blue!

That night he paced the floor in his home study, his hands clenched so tightly that his knuckles showed white under the torsion, his respiration erratic, his heart pounding like a trip-hammer! There was a sermon in the making. He wondered how he could ever have won the consent of his own mind to preach so calmly, so dispassionately, so listlessly, upon such high themes.

For it was not a new thing for D. Preston

Blue to talk to his people about the joy that devolves from living high-mindedly, and in an attitude of "waiting upon the Lord." He had often essayed such themes. He had done so conveniently, dignifiedly, in the well-poised manner of a school-master demonstrating to a class, "The square of the hypothenuse"—etc. And some had yawned, covertly; others had slept, candidly; a few had read the hymnal.

There would be no sleep for anybody on Sunday the third. Blue was developing a new sense of pulpit energy. He had a feeling that the place would be just a little cramped, that Sunday, where he stood. He rather wished they had made the platform wider when they built Broad Street Church. Must have thought the preacher wouldn't move hand or foot.

Next morning he went early to a printer. He explained that he wished to make a small card, about 6 x 3 1-4, and wanted to find a small "picture" that had something to do with a foot-race. The printer said he had no such "cut" in the shop, but suggested that if Dr. Blue would look through the typographical catalogue, he might find exactly the right thing.

This huge, heavy book was a great revelation to the minister. He had never suspected that

there was such a thing. He pored over it, interested for an hour. He found cuts of all sizes—trees, evergreen, deciduous, decorative; flowers, every type of flowers—some made to be used in one color, some in two; birds, bluebirds, "for happiness," doves of peace, patriotic eagles; figures of men in every possible posture and employment; little children at play; fountains in full spray; picturesque glimpses of a bend in the river; a mountain-top touched with dawn; the surf on a lonely beach; a group of tropical savages; a scene by the library table in a middle-class home on a winter night; ragged prodigals; the ultra-fashionable on promenade; a ship in a storm. Really—he thought—a man could pick up the ideas for some good sermons just by looking over these specimens of etchings.

At length, he found exactly what he was seeking—a cut of a group of runners on a race-course. They were straining every nerve. The expression on their faces showed them to be very near the breaking-point. There was a sketchy impression of a crowded amphitheatre in the background. This would do admirably.

As he planned his card, Blue thought it might add to its attractiveness if it had a touch of

color. He asked if it might have a border. The printer suggested a "double line rule" for this border. It was agreed. The minister thought he would like to have the border done in orange. The cut of the race-track was to go at the top of the card, printed in black, followed by this note, also in black:

Next Sunday will be "guest day" at Broad Street Church.

Our minister will preach a sermon on the peculiar conditions by which people who are utterly fagged from overwork, or worn down by worry, or half-sick over disappointments, take a fresh grip on whatever it is that they carry, and renew their interest and energy. He calls it "Their Second Wind."

I am inviting a few friends to come to this service, next Sunday morning, at ten-thirty, as my guests. Will you be one? I shall be glad if you are there.

Cordially,

The preacher tore himself away from the catalogue of cuts with reluctance. He was amazed to find how insignificant was their cost.

He wondered why, in this age when pictures are so generally used to carry a point, he had never thought of availing himself of these opportunities to appeal to people's interest and curiosity.

After estimating his requirements, he left an order for one thousand of the cards. Then he composed a note, to be printed on a sheet 8½ x 5½, carrying his name and church address at the top, which ran as follows:

> To Broad Street Church Enthusists:
>
> *You will know exactly what to do with these cards. If I were not so confident that you would be entirely willing to coöperate with me to the extent of using them, I should not bother you with this matter. But you are quite as anxious as I am to see our church filled. Need I add that if you do this promptly—now—while you think about it—there will be no danger of overlooking it until it is too late? Thanking you for the favor which I have every reason to think you will do for me, and our church, I am*
>
> *Sincerely yours,*
>
> .....

Blue had figured that of the one hundred and twenty "active" families of Broad Street Church's membership—if the word "active" was not too literally insisted upon—fifty families could be expected to sign and mail ten cards each. Seventy households would be asked to distribute five cards each. He felt there would be very little doubt about the actual functioning of this scheme. It would not be too much to hope that seventy-five per cent of these cards would be mailed. The member of the church would receive them in a package, stamped, ready for the addresses and his own signature. Surely he would be a careless and indifferent fellow who would refuse to do this simple favor for his minister and his church! Almost nobody liked to see a good postage-stamp wasted. Indeed, it was the stamp that made the adventure worth while!

It was not the first time that D. Preston Blue had addressed his church through a printed letter. He never had the sensation that such communications were of profit, however. He couldn't notice any difference in the size of the Sunday audience. Now he began to understand why this was true. His cards and letters had been dull, flat, stiff, formal. He usually began

them "Dearly Beloved." He always felt that this was rather ponderous, but it was customary for ministers to address their parishioners in that manner. He wished to do what was customary. He had been a slave to customs—the poorest of the customs.

This time he believed his letter would be read. The card would attract attention. He would mail the consignments to each household under first-class postage. For a long time he had been suspecting that his circulars and form letters, sent out under second-class postage, received very little notice. Besides, it made his cause look cheap, and only half worth doing! Blue was not making any effort to be economical in the present enterprise. However, when he totaled the items of expense, it did not appear to be an exorbitant sum. The thousand cards, in two colors, were costing him twelve dollars. This provided for excellent stock, and covered the cost of the cut. The mailing envelopes were already in hand, at his church office. He could put this item down at two dollars. The printed letter—120 of them—would cost two dollars and a half. The postage on the envelopes and cards would amount to twenty-seven dollars. The whole adventure

would cost less than the appropriation he had requested. There would be 850 cards for relaying through the homes of his members. He would have 150 left to use on personal friends who might be glad to have a card signed by the minister, himself.

Upon returning home, he spent a great deal of time copying, from the telephone directory, names of business and professional people who, he happened to know, were not church-goers. He believed that these acquaintances of his would welcome this courtesy.

It was this occupation that led Blue to adopt a system which proved, later, to be of inestimable value. He gradually evolved a scheme of collecting and compiling a list of "Prospectives." To the proper conservation of this list, he had the printer make a thousand cards, 5 x 3, to fit a drawer in the filing cabinet at the church office. These cards were labelled "Prospectives"—and contained the following matter:

PROSPECTIVES

Name..... *Bus. Ad*.....
Occup..... *Home*.....
Special interests.....
Met at.....
Remarks .....

Frequently, the minister met some citizens, at a public function, or at the home of a mutual friend, or in the course of business, to whom he was pleasantly drawn—a very good sign that the other man was also favorably impressed. It never occurred to Blue that there was any reason for his making a memorandum of the new friend's address, business, special interests, and the circumstances of their meeting, to be preserved for future reference.

No; these chance acquaintances drifting into his experience, for a moment, were retained in his memory for a day or two, and faded out of recollection. A good life insurance agent would have salted the new name away, together with every interesting fact he could learn about the man, his family, his friends, and his manner of life—whether he played golf, whether he was a base-ball fan, whether he handled a shot-gun or a fishing-rod, whether he was bookishly inclined, advanced or conservative in his general attitudes. But Blue, who was an agent for the finest line of life insurance extant, had been permitting these people to walk into his arms, and out again, with no thought that he and his institution might serve them, or that they might, by a little tactful

pains on his part, become powerful assets to his cause!

Once the scheme had begun development, Blue was amazed at the opportunities he found for making new friends. Sometimes, he suspected that he was particularly alert for new acquaintances because it was jolly to see his list of "Prospectives" growing. He sat by Robinson, at the Chamber of Commerce dinner. They chatted through the event. Robinson volunteered, when he heard that Blue was a minister—for no stranger ever thinks of talking to a minister about anything else than the church, which is most fortunate for the latter if he is eager to promote his business—that he was not a church attendant; had fallen out of the way of going, years before.

Blue did not attempt to shoulder Robinson, immediately, and bring him rejoicing into the fold. That would have been disastrous. All that Robinson needed was a little friendly cultivation; and, some day he would come wandering into the fold all by himself and under his own steam. It would never have done to crowd Robinson. That would have frightened him away. All that he required was a simple-hearted campaign of friendship, not too vigor-

ously pushed, but sufficiently definite to let him know that there was a preacher in Middlepoint who was honestly interested in him, as a good friend.

Mrs. Jones would introduce her neighbor, Mrs. Brown, at the monthly church supper. Mrs. Brown would observe, to Mr. Blue, that she often thought of coming to church on Sundays; but, somehow, there were always things turning up to prevent. Doubtless Mr. Blue had heard similar excuses before. He confessed that the explanation was not so new as to be shocking. Yes, somewhere he had heard the matter mentioned by others.

So—Mrs. Brown, together with whatever definite information she had confided about herself and her family, appeared presently in the minister's card-index of "Prospectives."

He was not sure what plans he would adopt to cultivate all of these people whose names were being added daily, to his list; but that problem would solve itself. He was sure of one thing—all of these acquaintances would receive invitations from him to attend his important service on the third!

It was interesting to the preacher to note the effect it had upon him to add a new name

to his "Prospectives." Just the act of recalling everything he could remember about this recent find, and of entering the data on a card, induced a fresh burst of speed on the part of his ambition to preach! He mentally pictured this new face in his audience. Here was some more raw material to be shaped for larger usefulness!

As the days passed, he grew more excited over his new program. The meetings on Thursday had amounted to Pentecostal celebrations. He had found the men eager to do their part. Evidently the word has been passed about, freely, that the preacher was about to perform a very interesting feat; for, at noon on Thursday, he was welcomed with unusual cordiality and enthusiasm when he arrived, and felt, as he presented his plan, that the case had been made before he offered it.

No less willing were the women to get behind this movement with all their energies. Many of them remained to tell him about certain neighbors of theirs who might welcome some attention from him. It appeared that the best of Broad Street's membership were quite as infatuated with the new idea as Blue, himself.

Thursday night, the preacher toiled until two o'clock in his study—no, not preparing his

sermon for the third, but for the coming Sunday; for now he was completely enamoured of his pulpit task. And it was a very excellent thing that he had given much attention to this sermon, too. Apparently the people of Broad Street Church were unwilling to wait for the important Sunday to come. By far the largest audience that had ever appeared in that auditorium, during D. Preston Blue's ministry, greeted him on the next Sunday morning. He could scarcely believe his eyes when he stepped into his pulpit and saw the crowd—and still coming. Moreover they were in fine spirits. There seemed to be more courteous attention to their business on the part of the ushers. The choir sang with more vigor. Needless to say, Blue preached as he had never preached before. He was conscious of an irresistible tug that seemed to reach up out of that large audience, demanding the best he had in him!

His very voice was changed. It had taken on new volume. It was deep, vibrant, flexible. He became utterly unconscious of himself—lost in his message! The message had pushed the messenger into the background! When he finished, and while the congregation sang, joyously, the closing hymn, Blue suddenly became conscious

that there wasn't a dry thread of clothing on his body. He was quite exhausted. Power had gone forth from him, that day. The people had touched him. And, this time, they had got something for their pains, too.

They crowded about the pulpit, after the service, and shook his hand. Some were profuse in their expressions of gratitude and congratulations. Others were silent—simply taking his hand, and passing on. Afterwards, as he recalled it, he rather thought these latter had been helped most.

It was customary, at the parsonage, to have dinner at noon, on Sundays. Mr. Blue always accepted his share of it with relish. This time he didn't want any; first, because he was too weary from his work of the morning—for that sort of a strain constitutes the hardest work that any man may perform; and then, again, he had meat to eat, that day, that they cannot understand who have yet to pass through a similar experience.

VII

A WIDER MINISTRY

ON Monday morning, as D. Preston Blue reviewed the extremely satisfactory event of the day before, the fact that stood out in his memory was the attitude of his audience. To be sure, it was larger than usual, by far. But that was not the significant fact. The thing that had impressed him was the new interest on the part of the same people who had been coming to church, regularly, for years. They sang the hymns with more courage. They listened attentively to the reading of the Scriptures. When it was time to stand, they rose promptly—not by little squads, as if timid to make the adventure—but unitedly. Their attention, during his preaching, was undistracted. They did not regard him with the glassy eye that has become detached from the brain, but with a keen alertness. He decided that larger audiences not only meant that more people would hear the gospel: it meant, as well, that the person who customarily went to church on

Sundays would now be able to hear it, also! That was important.

This morning, the preacher laid out his "blueprints" for his sermon of the following Sunday. It occurred to him that the time to plan a sermon was while the driving energy of the last service was still carrying him forward. Later, he discovered that his very best sermons were those he had outlined on Sunday afternoon, when the physical of him had been pushed into the discard and nothing was in operation but his extraordinarily active brain.

In the afternoon, Blue decided he would call on Tom's friend, Downey, in his office at The Commercial Tribune.

"Understand you preached a wonderful sermon, yesterday, Dr. Blue," said Downey, grasping the minister's hand, and seating him in a rickety chair that was half filled with papers. "Mrs. Downey went with some friends of hers who attend your church. She tells me I must go with her, next Sunday. Perhaps I shall. Have to work late, nights; you know."

The preacher brought tidings of Tom MacGregor, much to the delight of the editor. It was easy to find pleasant things to say of Tom. The visit was in danger of being protracted too

long, indeed, when a boy came in with a sheaf of yellow sheets and placed them on Downey's desk, hurriedly, as if it was very important that the editor should see them at once.

"Early telegraph," commented Downey. So it was time to go. Blue took his leave with the feeling that he would like to spend the afternoon there, watching the making of a paper; but it would indicate him to be a gentleman of leisure. He did not care to have his new friend think that his time was worth nothing.

Downey pleasurably recalled, after the minister had left, that he had not been urged to come to church. Surely, he had "put his guards down" and invited the preacher to close the deal. He had confessed that he was curious about the church; thought some of coming; had heard fine reports. And Blue had not jumped at him with a pathetic expression of gratitude; neither had he besought him to permit nothing to interfere with this splendid resolution. In fact, Blue had waived that all aside. Downey liked it. How much better that was than the everlasting hounding and coaxing that some preachers indulged in, in their feeble, unfruitful efforts to entice people into their churches.

"Blue knows he doesn't have to crowd himself

and his church on to people!" soliloquized Downey. "And that's probably why he doesn't have to—just because he doesn't do it! A man can come to his church—or leave it alone. Blue doesn't care a hang. He's got the right idea! People want to go and hear a man like that. He doesn't have to beg for business. It comes to him. Strange he has never cut any figure in Middlepoint. We must get him into things."

This marked the beginning of a friendship that was to mean more to both of these men than either of them imagined on the occasion of the minister's visit to the editor's sanctum.

Remembering what Tom MacGregor had said about the passion of the typical newspaper man for a story full of "human interest," Blue had that thought in the back of his head as he prepared for his next Sunday's work; for Downey might be present. As it happened, he was present, and himself wrote a vivid account of the sermon which was published, at some length, in the Monday edition of The Commercial Tribune.

Blue began to long for a wider ministry to the general public. He had stirred the interest of his members, at Broad Street Church, and it was not going to be difficult to rally many of his acquaintances, of the "prospective" list, to

his support. But there were many hundreds of people in Middlepoint with whom he sustained no possible bonds of contact unless he created them through the press.

He searched his sermons for such incidents, illustrations, and pertinent facts about life as might attract attention as the "lead" of a newspaper report of his Sunday discourses.

It was this search that prompted the preacher to put more of illustration into his sermons. If it was attractive to begin a newspaper story with an account of how one man succeeded and another man failed; what things guaranteed happiness, and what invited misery—it was of no less interest to the people who heard the sermon from the pulpit. So—he contracted "the homiletic habit." He fell into "a homiletic mood." Nothing ever came into his experience, now, without being held up and searched for sermonic treasures.

When the plumbers came to the parsonage, Blue went to the basement and asked them questions about their work, expressing a peculiar admiration for the easy manner in which they contrived to find and mend defective valves and leaking pipes. He asked them the names and uses of certain curiously-shaped tools, and they

warmed to him and to their own task, simultaneously. Here was a man, of a learned profession, who considered their job of sufficient importance to inquire into its details. The minister had decided that one of the greatest services any man can possibly render another man consists in aiding him to fall in love with his work, to enjoy doing it, to regard it with respect.

Blue fell to wondering if, after all, this wasn't a good place to begin in the adventure of winning a man's soul—to help him to a new love and respect for his daily task.

It delighted the preacher, immeasurably, when one of the plumbers next Sunday morning, approached him, leading a little girl of six by the hand, inquiring where he should take his Margaret for entrance in a class. How had all this come about? By explaining to the young plumber the way of salvation; or rebuking him for his neglect of what the church had to offer; or urging him, in honeyed words, to attend religious services at Broad Street Church? Not at all. The miracle had been accomplished through the friendly interest the preacher had shown in a worn bagful of wrenches and drills!

Get close to the public, then! That was the

answer to Blue's desire for a wider ministry. Leave off consulting Asia and the ancient Israelites for every moral and spiritual verity—and deal with men, of the present moment, heartening them for their common tasks, renewing their interest in their responsibilities, helping them to a more expressive affection for their families, and pointing their worth to the community and the state!

Blue discovered that this search for homiletic illustrations, from the every day experiences of his fellow-citizens, was a quest fraught with untold possibilities. The process of informing himself how other men lived had the effect of winning the confidence and regard of those who gladly, proudly furnished such information.

It was not a method that proved successful only with the man who handled wrenches and pincers in the gloom of his basement: it applied to the professional man, too. The preacher's "homiletic mood" was giving him the same sort of contacts with people that his Master had enjoyed!

Blue snaps an electric switch, inside his study door, and the lamp fails to glow. Where is the source of the trouble? Is it in the lamp,

or upstairs in the attic inside the fuse-box, or down on Tenth Street at the power house? Surely not at the power house, for his neighbors' lamps are brightly burning. And while he tries to locate the difficulty, his imagination is tripping along, merrily, evolving an illustration of the interrupted current. That was the chief trouble with most lives, he thought—a failure somewhere in society or the individual to transform current into light! And heat! And power! It would make a telling illustration; but, first, he must go down to the power house, explain to the manager why he wanted to know all about the causes of defective lamps, broken wires, burned-out fuses, and interrupted power. At the same moment that he was gaining accurate information for the uses of his parable, he would be winning the friendship and interest of another man who would be inclined to come to Broad Street Church, partly because he had conceived a liking for the minister, partly out of curiosity to hear what the preacher would have to say about the matter which he had taken pains to explain to him, at his request.

A few days before the Sunday which Blue had come to anticipate as the great event of

his ministry—and to which he afterwards reverted in precisely the same way—he went to his printer and ordered fifty cards, 14 x 11, printed attractively in black, with an orange border of triple line-rules, bearing, in the upper left-hand corner a good-looking half-tone of Broad Street Church, without any lettering—for everybody in Middlepoint would know a picture of that old church without the label; or, if he didn't, he could ask somebody else, which would have the effect of promoting conversation about it. As Blue proceeded in the business of advertising his pulpit message, he increasingly believed that one of the chief values of a piece of printed matter was its ability to make people ask questions, and discuss the exact significance of it.

Across the middle of this card appeared three words in block letters one inch tall, THEIR SECOND WIND.

That was all there was on the card.

On Friday afternoon, a high school boy was paid a dollar to distribute these cards, in certain shop windows, on factory bulletin boards, and in the lobbies of hotels and the railroad stations.

Many a smile was evoked by the strange

legend. One business man would ask another if this meant that the old Broad Street Church had got her second wind, or had the preacher got his, or were the people to get theirs?

It was one of those curiosity-stirring statements like the Master's "Come and see!"

These cards added very little to the cost of Mr. Blue's adventure—six dollars, to be exact—but they added more than a hundred people to the audience on the morning of the third—the sort of people, too, for the most part, who could not have been induced to attend a church unless baited there by extraordinary processes. Thirty days earlier, Blue would have said, had anyone suggested a method that would bring such people to church, "We don't care for the patronage of persons who come to the church to feed their curiosity!" Lately, Blue had come to the conclusion that he was expected to recruit an audience for far different reasons than their "patronage." The Galilean hadn't thought about a crowd in respect to its "patronage." The people were desperately in need of the gospel! That was the point! Moreover—that was the only point! What the general public might or might not do for Broad Street Church was quite beside the question! Broad Street

Church's task was to do something for the public!

In very truth, there was no deception in D. Preston Blue's window-card, however its cryptic legend might be interpreted. If anybody wished to remark, whimsically, that the old church seemed to have come by its "second wind," the statement would be nothing else than true!

In the Saturday papers, Blue bought a four-inch, single-column space in which he announced the nature of his sermon, for the next morning, in phraseology somewhat similar to that on the cards which, he had every reason to believe, were already in the hands of many hundreds of Middlepoint's people.

That night, he felt in much closer contact with the spirit of his Master than he had ever sensed before. He could hardly wait for the hours to pass! How different from his customary Saturday night mood! His task had become important! He felt himself a workman! A workman who had no cause to be ashamed!

VIII

WHEN WEATHER DOES NOT MATTER

HAD Rev. D. Preston Blue conceived the idea that he wanted a crowded church, just once in his life; and, having achieved that end, would rest content with his feat, it would have been comparatively easy to do. He could announce some sensational topic, wage an expensive advertising campaign, shoot off his broadside, and retire into the dignified obscurity which had previously been his portion.

Almost anybody could have done as much. It would have required very little effort. He could say that he proposed to attack the mayor, hinting of startling disclosures. He could announce that he would show Middlepoint why her water was a menace to public health. He might advertise that he would give specific cases, with details of their offenses, of local merchants who were charging excessive prices for their merchandise. He could get a crowd. Once!

Blue was not interested in such a proposition. He knew he was going to be wretchedly unhappy if, having tasted the joy of preaching to a large crowd, there would be an early relapse into the lethargic ways to which he had been a party for so long.

So, to guarantee against such a disaster, he began to lay plans for the immediate future, following the important day to which he had looked forward with such hopes.

In preparing the "weekly bulletin" for that memorable Sunday, he gave the whole of the fourth page to an announcement of a series of sermons to begin on the tenth, and occur on consecutive Sundays, for a month.

He had named this series "BAD INVESTMENTS." The specific topics were as follows: Sunday morning, the tenth, "A BAD INVESTMENT IN REAL ESTATE." He meant this to be a sermon centering about the story of the purchase of a field by one Judas Iscariot, sometime treasurer of the little retinue that attended the Master. On Sunday morning, the seventeenth, he would preach on "THE HIGH COST OF A DINNER"—intended to discuss the principles involved in the negotiation by which Esau disposed of his birthright. On the

twenty-fourth, his sermon would be on the theme, "LAPSED LIFE INSURANCE"—discussing the unfortunate deal by which Ananias, having attempted to provide himself and his wife with an annuity, failed to come through with the premium, and lost it all. On the first, he would speak on "THE FAILURE OF A LOAN AND TRUST COMPANY"—using the man who hid his entrusted talent of gold in the ground as an illustration of misapplied capital.

He proposed to close each of these sermons with a curiosity-stirring hint of the one to follow, on the succeeding Sunday.

It had occurred to him that sermons, in "serial order," would sustain interest better than independent and unrelated topics.

Once he had decided to use his weekly bulletin more freely as an advertising medium, the preacher wished to make that publication as attractive as possible. Formerly, it had been printed on a very cheap stock. It had contained a great deal of "standing matter" which was of no particular interest to anybody—long lists of all the officials of every auxiliary of the church, committees of the boards, and tiresome repetitions of stated events which were of concern only to a small group whose notifications

of such meetings and duties could be handed to them through other, and less expensive, processes. Moreover, the bulletin was not attractive in its general make-up. No care was exercised to make it readable.

Blue had a conference with his printer. It was agreed that the latter would purchase a font of very handsome and dignified border for each page. A new style of type was chosen for the composition. All the old, stock phraseology of announcements was abandoned for a business-like, crisp statement of important events to come. All the old "Every member should be there" appended to the announcement of the Women's Society on Thursday, and "We hope for a good attendance this time" added to the appeal of the Young People's Social on Friday night,—was to be dropped! It was wretchedly bad psychology. It was equivalent to saying to the stranger, "Not very often is the Women's Society well attended. True, every member should be there; but, usually, every member isn't."

"We hope for a good attendance this time" meant "Ordinarily, we have a poor showing at our social. We deplore this. We still hope, however." Oh!—what advertising!

It was somewhat like the preacher's announcement, from the pulpit, on Sunday morning, "You would encourage us greatly if you came to church on Sunday evenings. It is so depressing to come here, and find only a little handful. Can't you resolve, brethren, to be more faithful to this feature of your church duty?" And so forth.

With a recommendation like that, it is not much wonder if the people fail to be beguiled into attendance. Blue had been gradually coming to the conclusion that all begging must stop, so far as Broad Street Church was concerned. They were going to stop begging people to come to church, or to the meetings of the subsidiary societies. They were going to stop begging for money. The work of the whole institution would be elevated to a dignified position. They would make the features of Broad Street Church sufficiently alluring to plead their own cause, without any more whining!

The "paid space" in the Saturday papers Blue proposed to keep, on annual contract, which would greatly reduce its cost. He asked an active young artist of the city to draw an impressionistic sketch of the fine double doors by which entrance was had into Broad Street

Church. Plates were made of this drawing, mortised in the center to permit six short, leaded lines of composition to be inserted.

These plates would become as well-known as the unchangeable device of a business-house. The reader would know, at a glance, that this was Broad Street Church speaking, when he observed the peculiar "frame" in which the Sunday announcement was typed.

Again, Blue questioned the wisdom of filling this space with perfunctory statements of facts which everybody knew. Formerly, his Saturday announcements in the column devoted to that purpose, and published gratuitously, ran somewhat as follows:

> Broad Street Church; corner Broad and Oak; Rev. D. Preston Blue, D.D., minister. Sunday School 9:45 A. M. Public Worship 10:30 A. M. Sermon subject, "Moses." Y. P. S. C. E., 6:45. Evening service, 7:30. Theme, "A Good Man." The public is cordially invited to attend any or all of these services. Come with us and we will do thee good!

Critically analyzed, Broad Street Church had as much reason to assume that everybody in

Middlepoint knew its location as the Regent Theatre, so that could be omitted. If the stranger wished to know, he could inquire. It was psychologically bad for Broad Street Church to confess its doubt whether the people of Middlepoint even knew where it stood!

Blue doubted whether any child ever came to Sunday School because he or his parents had noticed, in the Saturday issue of The Commercial Tribune, that Broad Street Church maintained such an institution. Of course, Broad Street Church had a Sunday School! Every church in the city had one! And they all opened, by common consent, at 9:45 A. M., of course! Not P. M. The same observation was to be made about the Young People's Society. Nobody had ever come into it because of the announcement in the papers (and mighty few for any other reason.) As to the hours of the public services of worship, the public knew, too, that every church in the city observed these hours.

The preacher believed that he could say everything that was necessary in a very few words, and stand a better chance of these few words being read. After he had experimented, for awhile, with his new idea, Blue's Satur-

day announcements in the Middlepoint papers, were boiled down to their lowest terms. Everything pointed to the excellence of this psychology. In the window of the smartest shop in town, the public was invited to focus its attention upon one concept at a time; or, if there were two or three, the displays were closely related to one idea. Was the window-space crowded to the eaves with overcoats, fishing tackle, telescopes, encyclopædias, bird-cages, trunks, wash-tubs, table linen, and office supplies? It was not! A single strand of pearls, reposing on a velvet mat, held solitary court in one window; a tastefully chosen array of popular fiction occupied the center of the stage in another; a few fashionable shoes graced the window of a neighbor. Apparently, there was no room in the public mind for more than a very few ideas, at any given moment.

The preacher recognized the reasonableness of all this; and, after he had studied the principle, in its application to his own appeal to the public, for a few weeks, his Saturday announcements, set in the artistic frame which any citizen could instantly identify as the exclusive property of Broad Street Church, looked something like this:

> Dr. Blue speaks to-morrow morning on "THE HIGH COST OF A DINNER."
> This is the second address of his series on "SOME BAD INVESTMENTS."
> The ushers reserve seats for pew-holders only until 10:30.

Had such an announcement appeared, two months before, the membership of Broad Street Church would have giggled itself into hysterics over the caution that members had better get to church on time if they wished to find a place to sit down. But it was no laughing matter by the seventeenth! No; Mr. Blue had struck his gait, and he meant to hold it!

Formerly, the weather had had a very great deal to do with the prosperity of that church. A rainy Sunday meant collapse. When the preacher awoke, on Sunday morning, to the consciousness of lowering clouds, he heaved a deep sigh; for, that day, he would preach to a very small crowd—a depressed crowd—a depressing crowd. No crowd, at all—in fact! An unusually fine day, at a season of the year when fine days were at a premium, spelled disaster. At such times sunshine was as deadly as rain.

Blue did not have to concern himself about the weather, any more. He was as independent of it as the proprietor of the moving-picture palaces. It was of no consequence to him whether the sun shone or the rain poured or the blizzards raged. Broad Street Church was no longer shackled to a thermometer, barometer, or any other sort of weather-guage.

It means a great deal to a man to discover that the thing he is doing cannot be put completely out of business by a gentle patter of rain! The fact deepens his own sense of responsibility to perform, to the utmost of his ability, a task that other people think of with respect! That was the way it affected D. Preston Blue.

It is, perhaps, superfluous to report that the "great Sunday" fulfilled and quite exceeded all the expectations of the people most interested in its success. Not only was the place solidly packed, but many late-comers were turned away. That is very fine advertising for a church! A few able-bodied, ample-lunged citizens remarking to their business friends, around the Monday lunch table, down town, that "the wife and I went around to hear this man Blue, yesterday morning, and couldn't get

a toe-hold inside the front vestibule,"—was better publicity than could have been purchased at any price!

Blue had several brilliant opportunities to make mistakes, at that wonderful service—but he did not avail himself of them. He thought some of expressing his gratitude to the membership for fairly dragging their friends in by the hair of the head. It was due them, he thought, and he wished to say so. That would have been a wretched blunder. It would have been equivalent to saying, "This is the first time we ever had a crowd. We will never have another. The church has almost run its legs off, for the past few days, gathering up this large congregation." No—that would be bad!

It would be very much as if the exclusive shop should place a placard in the window beside the display of a modish gown, saying:

> *This gown is put out here to bait you inside. It is the only thing we have, however, that is worth looking at. The rest of our stuff is very ordinary trash.*

The minister made no comment, whatso-

ever, about the size of his crowd. He accepted it as if it were the usual thing. One might have thought, from his demeanor, that it was "all in the day's work" to preach to a multitude that was wedged into the pews until it could hardly get up; and, when up, found difficulty in getting down again.

Neither did he announce that he hoped they would all be back on the next Sunday morning, bright and early, as if such an act, on their part, would be a favor conferred upon him. That would have been "begging." Blue had stopped begging! His church wasn't a mendicant; nor was he. If people liked his manner of preaching, and the general attitude of the place, they would return. He would not have to coax them. The more coaxing, the less likely would they be to continue their interest.

Possibly the shock of seeing a crowded auditorium was slightly relieved by the fact that the preacher had reasons to believe that this would come to pass. At no time had he felt any distrust of the processes he was employing. The momentary misgivings he had entertained, due to his long habit of thinking about "crowds" as rabble, had been effectually stilled by the thought that his Master had never con-

sidered them so; and that when the throngs grew so dense, about him, that they actually trampled upon one another, instead of feeling ashamed that he had collected a crowd, he regarded the multitude as shepherdless sheep, everyway deserving of his most sympathetic attention.

It was now becoming easy to perform all the work that devolved upon him as the minister of Broad Street Church. It was as if some new kind of fuel had been thrown into the furnaces of a central power plant. Habitually cold radiators gave off a genial warmth. Customarily dim lights had grown bright. Erstwhile sluggish wheels were spinning at top speed. When Blue called a meeting of his board of trustees, every member was present, or accounted for. Business was transacted with the snap and vigor of a bank board. There was no reluctance, on the part of influential people, to accept responsible positions in the church. When a committee was appointed, it went immediately into operation and came forth with a report. The Sunday school superintendent, who had declared, some time before, that he wouldn't take the job again if they offered it to him on a golden platter garnished with orchids,

had come to the study, without invitation, to outline a plan he had thought of to recruit a larger membership in that department.

There was a new joy in service that the preacher had never experienced before. He had come to love his task to the extent that he thought and dreamed of nothing else. He wondered why it was that so many of his ministerial colleagues were restless, and apparently eager to find some other outlet for their energies than the vocation into which they had been called. And then he remembered his own mood of a few weeks earlier. He could understand. He wished he might tell them—every one of them—exactly what agonies he, himself, had experienced, prior to his discovery that a congregation would solve all of his problems.

Blue smiled when he thought of Jimmie Bardell's absurd statement about the value of advice from men of other professions than one's own. Jimmie hadn't been so far wrong, after all. Blue was willing to testify to the soundness of that proposition. For his own rejuvenation had come through the accidental contacts with his friends at the dredge man's party.

Or, was it accidental? Blue wondered.

IX

GLANCES INTO THE FUTURE

"WHAT shall I preach about?"—that terrifying nightmare of the preacher who has lost interest in his task—was not any longer one of Blue's problems. Whereas, before his great discovery of the motive and method by which Broad Street Church was realizing a prosperity that surpassed even his own most sanguine anticipations, D. Preston Blue had lived a hand-to-mouth existence, so far as his sermons were concerned, now his wealth of homiletic materials positively embarrassed him.

Formerly, on Tuesday morning (he had tried to save Monday for recreation), the minister began to thumb his library for ideas. Rarely was there a "motion before the house" when he entered upon this quest. Sermon themes were chosen more or less at random. Never were his raw materials allowed time to "season." He just grabbed them up, jambed them into this scheme for the day, tooled off their rough edges

so they would seem to be related, named the product, hastily, and the deed was done. No idea ever had time to grow up to commanding stature. It had to be used green, sappy, and soft. Not infrequently, when very hard-pressed, the preacher felt obliged to use the ideas of other men. As a sop to his own conscience, he always re-phrased these delightful bits of homily in much poorer language. It relieved him of the charge of plagiarism, he thought, if he stripped the satin off an idea and put a calico dress and an apron on it.

Occasionally, a theme attracted him, pleasantly, and then he would give himself over to it with considerable concentration. On these occasions, the product would be satisfactory. But, more often, he preached because it was Sunday; he prepared because he had to preach; he chose themes because he must prepare. Sermons, created under such circumstances, demanded much hard labor—not the labor of the artist, but of the slave! Both preparation and delivery were achieved with great effort, proving Solomon's statement that he who wields a dull ax must strike hard.

Now that preaching had become a delight, Blue no longer stood before his book-cases, on

Tuesday morning, taking down one volume after another, in the hope that his eye might light upon something of immediate use to him. He had quite abandoned his foolish habit of tossing the Bible open, by chance, and reading the pages accidentally spread before him, in search of a stray bit that might stir his imagination.

Themes crowded themselves upon him. He was forced to choose which of the ten topics that clamored for attention deserved a hearing! The only way out of this dilemma was to prepare an advance schedule of topics to be considered. He soon found that he was gathering materials for sermons booked so far as three months ahead. It gave him a new feeling of respect for his task to be able to say exactly what he proposed to do on a certain date, ninety days off.

In his selection of themes, Blue kept in mind the prevailing mood of the people as it would be shaped by the season of the year. He came to have a very high opinion of the value of festivals, anniversaries, and the commemoration of stragetic events of the church year. So important did the "mood of the season" appeal to him that he wondered if it were not true

that certain periods of the year inevitably propose a state of mind which ought to be recognized. He went to the library and searched a compendium of famous dates to see if certain months of the year were not to be distinguished by unique adventures and achievements.

He began with the thesis that the public does violence, and wreaks vengeance in July; that great discoveries are made in October; that November brings thoughts of death, and April new visions of life. To be sure, he did not know whether any of these propositions were true. But he meant to find out. He found that history was quite disagreeably unaccommodating at this point. John Huss had been burned in July. So far, so good. But Savanarola had been burned in May. The ninety-five theses had been nailed to the cathedral door in October; but the Emancipation Proclamation had been dated January first. Columbus had set forth from Palos in August. No—Blue had been searching in a blind alley. And this report of his investigation is made only as an example of the way his mind was beginning to work. He was becoming a practical psychologist.

There was no doubt, however, that the few

weeks preceding Easter invited an introspective mood. He planned his sermons for that period with this thought in mind. It was no mere accident that almost everybody became restless—spiritually restless during the early springtime; wanted to write poetry to relieve the surge of sentiment; longed to break from everything and sail the seas; wished for broad views from high mountains. Blue played up to this mood. Through Lent, he preached on topics that lured all persons suffering of spring wanderlust, leading these sermons with a series on "The Magnifying Mirror of March," a group which centered about the three temptations. In the first one, he appealed to that "what's-the-good-of-it" kind of restlessness that overcomes most people at that period of the year when they reflect that the main struggle of their lives is to solve purely economic problems. Blue believed that if there is a period of the year when people are most likely to think soberly on the proposition that "man does not live by bread alone," it is when the very first tidings of spring are in evidence on an occasional fine day. Any active imagination will proceed through the other considerations of this series without needing to be told that

Blue talked, in the second place, of the indefensibility of the "short-cut to public esteem" which many men have sought, to their own undoing, but is of a piece with all human ambitions—proved amply by the problem the Master faced on the balcony of the temple; or that he discussed, in the third place, the cost of those kingdoms which seem so desirable from the mountaintop, touched with the budding glory of spring—kingdoms strictly of the earth, earthy!

Habitually, the preacher had made abundant use of the Eastertide. Now, he saw great possibilities in Palm Sunday. Every afternoon of that week, a vesper service attracted large numbers of people; and at the three o'clock service on Good Friday, the church was literally crowded! His usual advertisement of Sunday services had been used to announce the Good Friday afternoon event. This advertisement had read:

> *At three, today, the choir will render "The Crucifixion" (Stainer.)*
> *Dr. Blue will deliver a brief address on "WOULD IT HAPPEN AGAIN?"*

The doors will be closed promptly at 3:05, *after which there will be no admittance.*

Certain loyal church officials doubted the wisdom of announcing that there would be no admittance after 3:05, but the preacher knew that the success of that service would depend upon the absence of confusion after the choir had begun the oratorio. As it turned out, the auditorium was full at three o'clock. Very few experimented with the church's decision to close its doors at the appointed hour; and those few were unable to secure entrance. If they were disturbed and disappointed to the extent of complaining to their neighbors, the latter were only impressed with the fact that when Broad Street Church announced a closing hour, that was the hour when they closed! It was very much better than for some indifferent person to remark, "And after all that fuss that the minister made about the doors being closed at five minutes after three, I went there at three-thirty, and they let me in without a word!"

On the Sundays nearest to important national festivals, Blue treated themes appropriate to the day. It was no small matter to

have the church related to the outstanding events of the nation's life! On Washington's Birthday, the preacher did not attempt to review the whole biography of the first president, contenting himself with a single feature of the great man's life which had to do with moral imperatives.

Again, there were certain local festivals which Blue meant to include in his program. Middlepoint was somewhat inclined toward the cultivation of interest in music. Annually, in June, there were a few consecutive days of musical events. An orchestra, from a neighboring large city, a local chorus, and well-known soloists who had made a place for themselves in the public eye, provided the music for this "Festival." Large numbers of out-of-town guests attended this series of concerts which closed on Saturday night. It would be natural that many of these strangers would remain in the city, over Sunday. Broad Street Church recognized this opportunity by announcing a service, largely of music, for the Sunday morning following. The minister spoke on a theme appropriate to the occasion, and of interest to music-lovers. The day was frankly announced as "Festival Sunday."

Noting the large number of family reunions during the Thanksgiving season, Blue decided to call the Sunday following the last Thursday of November "Home-coming Sunday." He had taken pains to retain the list of all persons who had removed from Middlepoint, formerly attached, by membership, friendship, or family relation, to Broad Street Church. He meant to keep this list alive, by making frequent inquiries as to changes of address. It was planned that, a few weeks before the event, letters would be sent to all of these people requesting them to return on that day; or, if that were impossible, to send letters telling the congregation about themselves. This had the effect of reminding many "strays" that they were in duty bound to ask for their letters of transfer to churches of their own communities. Blue wondered if it would not be permissible to ask each "alumnus" of the church to make a small donation, on these occasions, to be used for a specific purpose in making old Broad Street Church more attractive. He had not done it, yet; but the idea was in the back of his head.

It was not much less important to look out for the interests of the "retrospectives" than the "prospectives"! It was surely an inde-

fensible position for a church when it was obliged to confess that it had no notion what became of its people, when they were obliged to remove to other localities, for business reasons. Hereafter Broad Street Church was going to conserve all of her resources!

Previously, there had been two or three important times of "ingathering" when D. Preston Blue accepted applicants into the fellowship of the church. That began to appear as an unsound proposition, psychologically considered. He had featured Easter as one of these high days. But what was there about Easter that would make a special bid for people to unite with the church? Was not such a practice calculated to develop the thought in the public mind that a confession of faith was somehow tied up to the Easter concept? Would it not be better to give the people to understand that all days are alike in their appropriateness to a public decision to follow the Master? Anyway—would it not have a very excellent effect upon the congregation, if, every month, or more often, a dozen people would come to the altar of the church and ask for the privilege of becoming members?

Blue often wished that the ceremony of ac-

cepting members into the church was somewhat more impressive. Many an hour did he ponder upon this matter. Once he thought that since most men seemed to cherish the little badges, lapel-buttons, and other decorative devices symbolic of membership in clubs and fraternal orders, the church could do herself a service by formally adopting a device to be stamped upon a gold ring. Each member, upon assuming the vows of fidelity to Christianity, and the church, would be given this ring. It would be placed upon his hand with the instruction that it was the property of Broad Street Church. It would never belong to him, as an individual. He was only to be the custodian of it, the trustee of it. So long as he lived up to the requirements of his own conscience, in the light of the obligations he had assumed, he might wear it. It would be hoped that he would wear it proudly. When the time came that he had become indifferent to all that the ring symbolized, he was to return it to Broad Street Church. That would be the sign that he was through. Until the ring came back, Broad Street Church would believe that he was ready to undertake any reasonable service asked of him.

The more he thought about it, the better he

liked the scheme. When he reflected upon the almost irresistible appeal of the rosary, especially to the active imagination of youth, and the very excellent effect that simple device had achieved, for ages, in keeping the individual, who carried it, under constant reminder of its significance Blue wished that Protestantism might avail itself of some appealing symbolism of the sort.

Some day, he reflected, he would propose this to his congregation, and see how they reacted to it. As he remembered Dr. Tracy's suggestion that a Ten Dollar "application fee" might have the effect of creating more interest in church membership, Blue wondered if this money might not be spent for a ring, to be "loaned" to the new member, under conditions indicated earlier. Well—all that would take care of itself, in due time.

The great fact in his mind was that he, who had been utterly discouraged, was now in a position to achieve some worthy endeavors in the cause of a Master of whom it had been said that when he looked upon the multitudes, he was moved with compassion.

So fascinating had become his task, that the minister gave himself to it with complete aban-

don. Sometimes, his best friends counselled him that he was working too hard. He knew that he was not. He knew that no man went to pieces doing work that he loved. But then, he reflected, even if he should work himself to death—that would not be an altogether inappropriate way for a man to die who had sworn to follow the leading of one whose ministry had encountered a tragedy at thirty-three!

X

A VACATION INVENTORY

IT was ten o'clock. Stiff in every joint, but quite oblivious to his physical discomfort, the Rev. D. Preston Blue sat on the veranda of the borrowed bungalow overlooking the water, his mind disturbed by very serious reflections.

An old man had said something to the minister, early in the afternoon, that had haunted the preacher's thoughts for hours. Doubtless the old fellow's quaint remark, and the incident that had prompted it, possessed some sermon value. True to his habit of analyzing every experience of life for a possible spiritual significance, the preacher had searched the uncouth words diligently. It had just come to him that the cryptic remark was aimed at one Rev. D. Preston Blue, pastor of Broad Street Church of Middlepoint.

As conviction deepened that the words "Thou art the man!" had been spoken, Blue looked less and less like a care-free parson on vacation. He

sat motionless, with tightened lips, corrugated brow, flexed muscles, and accelerated pulse.

From two to four that afternoon, stalled in mid-lake, Blue had tinkered hopelessly with a cantankerous little motor-boat—an invention closely resembling a violin in that when it is good there are only a few better things, and when it is bad there is positively nothing worse. He had unscrewed all the nuts and taps that would come off the engine, had wiped each one carefully on his trouser-leg, and, having inspected them with the gravity of ignorance, had screwed them back on again. He had cranked until he reeled with vertigo and reeked of perspiration. His knuckles were bloody, his throat was parched, his temples throbbed, and his patience was gone.

Whereupon, old Nate Ruggles had chugged alongside, in his funny little tub, to inquire what ailed her—a query that had been gradually arising in the minister's own mind for some time. He said exactly that; though this satirical delicacy was quite wasted on Nate whose palate had never been trained to appreciate such lemon-flavored rhetorical dainties. The old man cackled in the self-assured treble of native wisdom aged seventy-eight, dragged

his rheumatism over the rail, and fell to examining the object of Blue's solicitude with judicial eye and confident fingers.

Presently he reported on his findings. Dexterously shifting his quid to a position which made articulation possible, Nate remarked, sagely, "Parson, you've a-flooded 'er with gasoline, and your batteries is a-runnin' low. Yessir, them two things is wot ails 'er. She's a-been gettin' too much gas and not enough spark!"

And now it was ten o'clock. The turtles were yawp-yap-yap-yap-yoodle-hooing down by the boat-house, but D. Preston Blue did not hear them. The three-quarter moon had flung a long bridge of gold across the lake, but Blue failed to observe it. His wife sat at his elbow, but he was only half conscious of her presence. Since early twilight the preacher had been at grips with a serious problem.

Suddenly rousing from his apparent torpor, he exclaimed, "I've got it!"

"Yes?" queried Mrs. Blue, in a tone of mingled interest and amusement. "I'm so glad you have, dear. I have been horribly lonesome. Please tell me what it is that you have got!"

So, he told her. It took him nearly all night to tell her; for it was a long story.

One of the chief benefits of a preacher's vacation is the opportunity it affords him to get far enough away from his job to view it telescopically. Its little details, which loom up so ominously at close range, fade so nearly out of the picture that they cease to clutter his vision of the things that really matter. It is so easy for the preacher's life to settle into mere humdrum; so easy for it to wear almost inescapably deep grooves in his circuit of daily duties and the weekly performance of conventional tasks; so easy to accept and follow customary ways of doing things without pausing to inquire into their adaptability to meet changing conditions.

This season's vacation was bringing a flood of new light into the mind of D. Preston Blue. It was the first time since his signature had been affixed to his new lease on life, that he had been able to tear away from the rapidly multiplying duties which his success invited. As he reviewed all that had happened in the past few months—his almost miraculous rise from the very depths of despondency to the heights of an exultant happiness in his ministry—it was with difficulty that he associated himself with that other Blue who had fallen so low in spirit that, he was now compelled to

confess, it was only by force of economic necessity that his flanges had been held to the rails.

There had been a day, not so very long since, when, had his assets consisted of more than a little piece of overtaxed yellow clay environing a leaky house and a few tumble-down farm-buildings, plus a half dozen thousands of life insurance which couldn't be collected so long as he remained so disgustingly healthy, the preacher would have resigned and retired—a failure.

On an occasional bright day he had reflected that if he could only get out of Middlepoint, where the conditions were all against him (though he could not have named or defined one of them) he might see the consummation of some of his cherished dreams. He had fallen into the habit of consulting the column of "Calls and Resignations" in his weekly church paper, seeking news of some Utopia where great throngs gathered on Sundays and a dreadfully depressed preacher, weary of his job, was in immediate demand.

Wisdom should have told him—for he was not a fool—that no hope was to be had of the ancient fallacy which believes that the grass is greener and more succulent on the other side

of the fence. He might have known that by giving his household furniture an expensive ride of three hundred miles, he would be altering his problem only as to its address. He might have known that if he had anything in him, at all, it would come out, in Middlepoint, quite as easily as anywhere else in the world.

And then, at an hour when his only reason for remaining on his job was not unlike the explanation the Unjust Steward gave for the doubtful transaction to which he resorted—he couldn't dig, and he was ashamed to beg—there came that rosy morning when some new life had been pumped into him from an unexpected quarter!

Blue had milled over his transformation, step by step, during his vacation, sometimes shuddering over the experiences from which he had emerged, sometimes taking a certain delight in reviewing them as they threw his present successes out into higher relief.

Now, there comes a time in the experience of every preacher who has been a party to such a resurrection—for this miracle has been wrought more often than is commonly believed —when his new responsibility makes him humble. He does not come by that sensation

at first. Just the sheer wonder and delight of witnessing the transfiguration of his own spirit; just the natural joy of seeing his little handful of loaves expanded into a feast for thousands; just to observe the people's surprise and happiness when, after having been served a very inferior vintage, the table had suddenly become graced with a cup delectable—occupies his whole attention. His feeling of gratification knows no bounds. He had always wanted a live church and a magnetic congregation. And now he is getting it! Hallelujah!

Then the novelty begins to lose its tang of fresh varnish, and ceases to be a wonder. It becomes an accepted fact. Comes now with a shock the almost terrifying sense of responsibility to do something more for these eager people than merely preach interesting sermons to them.

D. Preston Blue had arrived at that stage. As he sat there, gazing wide-eyed and unseeingly into the night, his heart was unaccountably heavy. He had wanted a great congregation. He had found it. His dream had come true. He surely had no occasion to feel depressed. People were going to come to his church in increasing numbers. But, ex-

actly why did people go to church? Why should they go to church? To hear a sermon? Was that all? Was there not another—indeed a primary—function of the church that he, Blue, had completely ignored? Was he helping to satisfy that irresistible heart-hunger of the normal human soul for a closer contact with the Infinite? Was he doing anything to deepen the desire or increase the capacity of his people for worship?

After all, wasn't it the main business of the church to offer a service of worship so reverential and inspirational that it would serve as a spiritual tonic to souls desperate to escape the tyranny of material things—almost frantically eager to catch occasional gleams of that intangible heart-kingdom where the youth of the spirit is renewed?

These self-searching queries had given Blue some painful hours, tonight. He had become shamefully stricken with remorse—the kind of remorse that sends a dull ache into the throat and a stinging, blinding pain into the eyes. He had come perilously near to forgetting, in his enthusiasm over building up a crowd, that the chief end of religion is to worship God!

As Blue reviewed the so-called "service of

worship" customarily rendered in Broad Street Church, it galled him to reflect upon those cold, gray ashes that stood for an altar-fire. It humiliated him to remember how lifeless, how prefunctory the thing was—so exceedingly dull that even he, himself, thought of it, when and if he thought of it, as a mere something-necessarily-to-be-gone-through preliminary to the main event of the hour—his sermon. Of course, his sermon was the big thing. Of course, the people had come to hear him preach. The "opening service" was a sort of penance that must be offered as the purchase price of the wonderful sermon.

Some of his members had frankly accounted for their habitual tardiness at the Sunday morning service with the bland explanation, "Oh; all that we care for is the sermon, anyway!"—and Blue had been so short of sight as to feel complimented. He had been a fool!

Torn now with remorse, the preacher resolved to analyze that cold, profitless, and all but sacrilegious "order of worship"—a piece of mummery that had become so trite that even he was heartily glad when the last wearisome yawn of it had been duly recited, and the books chucked back in the rack. Blue was under con-

tract to mend matters at this point without further delay.

This, then, was the burden of his thoughts, tonight. It was a very serious consideration. It was not much wonder that he didn't hear the turtles, or see the moon, or chat with his best pal. He was under conviction of a blunder that was considerably more serious than a mere error of judgment in method, in detail, in processes. He had failed at a vital point!

So—with all the painstaking care of an egyptologist unwrapping a mummy (not a bad simile), Blue began to investigate that "service of worship," bit by bit, item by item.

In the very first place, it was a service absolutely devoid of thrills. At the theatre, where there was nothing much more serious at issue than the untangling of a series of complicated misunderstandings between the hero and the heroine, there were certain tense moments when people stopped breathing and sat transfixed! At the church, where the issue involved was the attempted establishment of actual, vital relationship with the Absolute—the invocation of His Presence at whose word light had dispelled the darkness, by whose divine fiat the worlds had appeared in space, by whose

supernal genius His creatures had been endowed with a consciousness of their own immortality—this solemn and mysterious function was performed drowsily, calmly, with an air of tedium, boredom, and distate.

There wasn't a single feature of that "service of worship" calculated to quicken a man's respiration, or grip his throat, or stir his pulse! What little of solemn ritual there was in it possessed no current, no rapids, no eddies, no sudden, unexpected plunges over huge ledges into unfathomably deep pools, no sharp turns revealing startlingly beautiful vistas ahead—no!—but just ambled lazily along on a level like the sleep Yanktse Kiang, for five hundred miles without a ripple! It reached no dramatic climaxes; pointed to no definite goal; never poured its flood into the deep sea. It spread out over the sands, and disappeared.

Whatever pauses there were in the service were not eloquent silences, portentous with meaning. They were only awkward delays which the congregation availed itself of as a suitable time to cough in concert, and leaf the hymnal, and wind the watch, and wonder whether there's enough in the tank to run to Blinkton this afternoon or had we better fill

it before we start, and speculate on whether her hat, the forecastle of which shuts off the view, is last season's rosette upsidedown or the 1918 model turned wrongsideout.

Considered as a whole, then, the service lacked life. It was cloddish, sluggish, heavy; a worse burden than Solomon's grasshopper. As Blue invoiced the thing, seriatum, he became conscious that most of its inspirational possibilities had been annulled through his own habit of getting in the way of every potential emotional thrill by the utterance of stupid commonplace.

For example: he always insisted upon announcing the opening hymn with which the service began. True, it was printed on the bulletin, in every member's hand, that the first hymn would be Number 145—printed so plainly that the wayfaring man needed only to glance at it for required directions. But Blue always announced it, anyway.

Before his resolution that a man of his vocation should attempt to speak, for his cause, in a tone of authority—an idea he owed to his friend Dr. Tracy—the preacher had been in the habit of beginning most of his pulpit announcements with that wobbly-kneed, suppliant

whine, "Shall we not now" do whatever-it-is that we customarily do, at this time? It was a disgusting habit! What wretched psychology! What a contrast from the thrilling words of the old prophets, "Hear ye, oh Israel!"

Blue had recovered from the "Shall-we-not" disease, but he was still full of glib announcements—unnecessary announcements. He would propose the first hymn with several repetitions of the number, a comment upon the desirability of singing it heartily, remarks upon the lofty sentiment thereof, reflections upon the authorship of the words, or the tune, or both —at considerable length.

Then there would ensue an awkward pause, in which the organist was guessing whether Dr. Blue had said everything that was in his mind, at the moment. Having had the experience of interrupting the minister's flow of remarks, a time or two, with a chord from the organ, that functionary was wary about beginning until he had made doubly sure that he would be put to no humiliation by cutting in where he wasn't wanted.

It being fully demonstrated that the preacher had said it all, the organ would wail out a puny little combination of "solicional"

and "vox celeste" wherewith to introduce the hymn, rendering the whole of it in this frail manner until by the time the congregation was actually turned loose to sing, it didn't want to.

There is a peculiar psychology back of all this. When the minister had begged his congregation to sing, this time, very heartily, the sensitive man in the pew is reluctant to make the adventure. He fears his neighbor may think that, having made a new resolution inspired by the minister, he will now open up and show these good people of his immediate vicinity that whereas he had never sung very much before, he is done with all trifling. He will show them how to sing! The consciousness that he has been urged to sing better, louder, more musically, more joyfully than usual has the effect of calling his own attention to his untrained voice, and he subsides.

Blue would not feel the necessity of urging people to sing, heartily, if they were given a chance. Mistake number one was registered when he chattered so long about the hymn. It was quite superfluous even to announce the number. The business of "numbering" hymns is a nuisance that appears to be necessary. How

much better if the hymn could be announced by its name only, as if its identity were sufficiently established to render its number a useless appendage! Mistake number two had arisen in the type of organ prelude with which the hymn had been introduced. The soft little peep-peep of the organ had discouraged the congregation from any attempt to begin singing the hymn, on the very first word, because the people were afraid there would be no support. Indeed, there was no support! For the organ continued, through the verses, with a feeble combination of registers which had never been intended for any such purpose. The audience was fearful of the sound of its own undisciplined voice.

That was one count of the indictment, then, and a very heavy one. The "service of worship" had begun all wrong! It didn't have to wait, to get flat and stale, after awhile. It began that way!

Blue was revolving these things in his mind, now, torturing himself with his blindness and stupidity. The fact that oppressed him most seriously was the thought that he had been talking too much in his service.

As the events of it passed in review, he saw

himself saying, at the time of reading the responsive psalm, "We will now turn to selection one hundred and six, in the back of the hymnal; page one hundred and twenty, and read responsively." This announcement, too, was printed on the bulletin; but perhaps the people couldn't or wouldn't read. In any event, the responsive reading must be announced orally. Then came another of those blighting delays, while the congregation hunted for the place. Blue was always conscious of the awkwardness of this moment, and his only remedy for it was the general cure-all he proposed for every pause in the service—just plain jabber! He would continue repeating, dully, while they leafed and searched, "Selection one hundred and six—on the one hundred and twentieth page—in the back of the hymnal!" He said it kindly, paternally, soothingly, in the tone of the dentist who remarks, as he inserts a still more vicious-looking drill into his engine, "Now just one more little place to attend to—I'll try not to hurt you—have patience for a moment more."

So it went. Every time there arose the merest ghost of a chance for the congregation to enjoy a minute of blessed silence, here was

Blue, chattering away like a magpie! Not saying anything; just talking—spouting useless directions and exasperating inanities.

Indeed, he was having a bad night, as he tallied up the score he had against himself as a chronic disturber of the peace on Sunday mornings! With burning cheeks, he reviewed the whole of his hopelessly dull "service of worship" searching for the exact causes of its failure; when, suddenly, the real secret stood out, clear cut as a cameo. He leaped from his chair.

"I've got it!" he shouted to Mrs. Blue. "I know, now, what ails Broad Street Church! She's a-been gettin' too much gas and not enough spark!"

D. Preston Blue was not a puritan. Naturally sympathetic, he made a great deal of allowance for other people's faults, and tried to find something good to say of almost everything that admitted of a generous word. He was not a knocker. He had, however, one pet aversion—the stage. He never allowed an opportunity to go by without paying his respects to actor-folk.

It had never occurred to him that the chief reason for the public's interest in the stage

could easily be accounted for on the ground that dramatists understood the art of appealing to the human emotions. They were able to sense those moments, in the course of the enactment, when speech would be silver, and silence golden! They had the rare ability of planning situations so that a delightful element of surprise would demand a quick intake of breath, a great bound of the heart, and a surge of emotion from the very depths of the auditor's soul! And why were actors able to command so large an amount of public attention and respect? Because they had given themselves, tirelessly, to the business of perfecting every minute detail of their tone, gesture, inflection, action, at moments when only such fine discrimination produced the desired effect. Before a play was publicly presented, the actors had rehearsed their parts, with unflagging patience; and, when only a few days elapsed before the presentation, they worked, almost continuously, pausing hardly for meals or sleep, to correct the tiniest faults which the most exacting critics had been able to observe.

Blue disliked them, disliked the grip they had upon the public imagination, feared the results of their influence. The stage was bad. In

some respects, he was right. The stage committed many blunders. It produced plays, sometimes, bidding for emotions which were far better discouraged. But actor-folk, whatever Blue might think or say of them, were interested in their main business of life, which was to produce psychological effects and inspire the manner of thoughts and emotions that the play demanded.

As the preacher contemplated this fact, he remembered that, not infrequently, he went into his pulpit on Sunday morning without knowing what he would read as a Scripture lesson; that only rarely had he read the passage aloud before doing so in the service; that never had he rehearsed it until he knew precisely what inflection was required by certain phrases, exactly where, and of what duration, should occur the pauses in its rendition; that he often read a hymn, publicly, on the spur of the moment, and without any previous study; that his prayers were—well, the kind of prayers that might be expected of any man composing his language as he proceeded!

He resolved that he would leave off chatting on the subject of actors until he had been able to imitate their industry, at least! His trouble

was quite apparent. Plenty of gas—there was no doubt of that! But no spark! And there was no doubt of that, either!

Needless to say, explanations followed the preacher's somewhat startling announcement to his wife, and she was able to share his reflections. She encouraged him to tell her of his plans for a better order of worship, and he begged her to help him with suggestions.

"Well," said Mrs. Blue, with a woman's natural inclination to repair whatever might be mended, "why don't you begin at the very first moment of the service, and see what changes should be made. First, there is the opening hymn."

"No," disagreed her husband, "first is the organ prelude, which Broad Street Church uses to drown whispered conversations in the pews. We will insert a notice in the bulletin that the organ prelude is a part of the service of worship. Perhaps, if the organist is given to understand that the people are listening to his organ number, he may put a little more into it."

There was a silence of several minutes during which the preacher remembered dismally that this inattention on the part of the audience

while the organ prelude was being rendered might easily be explained by his own attitude toward it; for had he not customarily spent the whole of that period fussing over his holy properties—locating his Bible lesson, and the reading in the hymnal, and the ritual, and the opening hymn, and toying with his sermon notes, and fumbling through the bulky sheaf of announcements with which he would later drug his congregation almost into insensibility? Was it not readily to be seen that he had no interest whatsoever in the organ number? Anybody could see that he was only waiting for it to stop so that he might begin.

He wondered if there was anything to hinder his stepping into his pulpit, on Saturday night, to attend to all these little errands. Perhaps it would do no harm, anyway, to stand there, on Saturday evening, in that silent, dimly-lighted place, and ask for power to lead the people into a worshipful mood on the next morning. Indeed, he thought, if there was a convenient way to do it, he would like to spend the whole of Saturday night in the church.

Ah, but it was a wise old cult that required its officiating priest to sleep in the temple on the night preceding his celebration of the

weekly service of worship. Many an otherwise powerful sermon has had the breath of life clattered out of it by the rattle of breakfast dishes, the crying of babies, and the general confusion at the parsonage on Sunday morning. Blue decided that, hereafter, he would get up at six o'clock, prepare his own breakfast, and hie himself to his little den in the attic, on Sunday morning, where nothing short of serious illness or a fire could disturb him until it was time to go to his important task of the day.

"That organ prelude," said Blue, soliloquizingly, "should be one of the most significant events of the service. People come in from the racket of traffic on the streets. They have been shouted at, and assaulted with all manner of raucous and discordant noises, all the week. They should be given a chance to relax, and consult their own souls. Not only should they be given this opportunity, but they should be furnished with an incentive! They ought not be overpowered with a great noise—a thunderous blare of metallic clamor. This organ selection should begin with an impassioned tug at the heart-strings. By easy stages, it should woo the spirit up on higher ground, growing in volume, almost imperceptibly, until, near

its close, it seems to be building up toward some definite action. The people must be filled with a desire to express themselves.

"Without a pause," continued the preacher, speaking more to himself than to his wife, "the organist will modulate into the score of the opening hymn. Just think of the effect of it, my dear," he exclaimed. "—the organ piling harmony upon harmony, higher, richer, fuller, until in one great, triumphant chord, it peals out the majestic measures of "Oh God, the Rock of Ages" or "Holy, Holy, Holy" or "Our God Our Help in Ages Past." And the choir comes to its feet, and the congregation rises, as one man,—and then they sing! Fine—isn't it?"

Blue remembered a service he had once attended in which the organist had begun with a meditative prelude, rising to a martial mood; and, because the minister was going to speak that day on a patriotic subject, brought the congregation to a stand with the strains of "The Star Spangled Banner"—after which he swept his choir and the audience into the first verse of "Lead on, Oh King Eternal," which happened to be pitched in the same key, and therefore required no introduction, at all. True,

the congregation had not known, for an instant, exactly what was afoot, but it was not very long about finding out; and the genuine thrill of the surprise was sufficient to start the service with high spirit.

"Now," said Blue, "the ritualistic service of worship begins. I don't believe we had better fumble in the back of the hymnal, any more, trying to locate a responsive reading. Nobody could ever make an impressive moment out of a situation like that. We'll plan a brief service, and print the whole of it in the bulletin. Whatever it lacks in length, it can make up in power. Anyhow, the readings in the back of the book were never built for the uses of responsive reading. One might sing them, perhaps. But they are hard to read. Most of them are too long. The majority of them are filled with local color pertaining to the Jews."

The preacher amused his wife by reciting a few well-known passages from the responsive readings in their own hymnal.

"What possible good can come to a crowd of able-bodied citizens in America, with the twentieth century already a fifth gone, to stand and read together about 'precious oil upon the head,' 'the dew of Hermon,' 'the kings of

Tarshish,' 'the gold of Ophir, and the topaz of Ethopia'? What is to be gained by reciting some parochial observation like 'Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up thy might!' And so many of them have a curious trick of ending on some awkward phrase like 'Yea; the work of our hands, establish Thou it!'—leaving one with the uncomfortable feeling of having come off and forgotten something, until the next event of the service mercifully blots the dissonance out of mind. No; we will not go to the back of the hymnal any more; at least not until we have some better plan than we see now.

"After that first hymn, there is going to be a moment's impressive silence. The doors to the auditorium will all be closed. The ushers will seat no more late-comers until the ritualistic service is concluded. The service isn't operated for the sole purpose of seating the tardy, anyway. If they will come late, they can do exactly as at the orchestral concert or the theatre—wait for an intermission. No one will value Christianity more highly for being permitted to treat the church with disrespect."

"And then—after the silence—" encouraged Mrs. Blue.

"Then comes the invocation, and after it, a response from the choir, sung without accompaniment, and very softly. I think I shall ask Mr. Young if we cannot train a male quartet to do that part."

"It would be very impressive," said his wife, earnestly.

"Then there would be something of a penetential nature read from the pulpit, followed by a like reading from the congregation. Then an introduction of the praise element; a reply from the people, a response from the full choir, and a united singing of the doxology. Without a pause, after the doxology, the choir will plunge into its praise anthem, as the congregation is seated again; and when this is ended, the doors may be opened for the seating of late arrivals."

Blue was reluctant to talk about the pulpit prayer. It was a very sensitive point. He knew that this was the poorest service he ever rendered.

He had been saved from the disgusting practices which lower the tone of many a pulpit—tricks of addressing the Great Unseen as if on terms of almost contemptuous familiarity with Him. He had never fallen victim to

the habit of using such phrases as "Now, Lord, just send us" whatever-it-is—in the same inflection one uses when speaking over the telephone to his old friend the butcher, "Now, Sam, just send us some *lean* pork-chops this time, wont you? No; we have plenty of bacon, Sam. Just the pork-chops; thank you."

He had never been so foolish as to adopt the "you" for "Thou" in addressing Deity. But he was aware that his prayers were not helpful. Rarely did he think about them until the moment. Sometimes, he tried to catch some inspiration from the solo which immediately preceded it. Occasionally, he would begin with a citation from that musical number, as if he and the soloist had conspired to make this a very telling situation, whereas the soloist was so ignorant of the preacher's plans that he might be singing "By the Waters of Babylon" on the day the sermon was entitled "The Joy of Living." Blue knew he was weak in pastoral prayer. He resolved to write out his prayers, and memorize them, putting into them the same careful preparation that he gave to his sermon.

By and by, he came to the point of reviewing his pulpit announcements of events to

come. Belated messages, turned in after the bulletin had gone to press, were now to be read. There was no getting out of it.

"The ladies of Group Five have a very fine egg-beater for sale at the small price of fifty cents."

There would be a half-shamed smile on the faces of the people. He might as well develop this smile, and let the matter go as a pleasantry. Likely as not, he would say that whenever Group Five—goodole Group Five—appeared on the market with an egg-beater, it might be assumed that the egg-beater was a world-beater. (For shame!)

Blue knew that it was just this sort of drool, from the pulpit, that had driven men like Jimmie Bardell and Dave Tracy out of bounds, so far as the church was concerned. Was it not enough to make an intelligent man want to crawl under the seat in shame that he had become a party to such a meeting?

But what was a preacher to do? Here is Mrs. O. D. Liverus, tirelessly working for the best interests of the church, bungling and fumbling, but entirely well-meaning; and she comes to the church office, at 10:27, fluttering a piece of paper, and saying, in a pleading voice, "Oh, Mr. Blue, I know this isn't right; and you don't

want us to do it—but oh, Mr. Blue, Mr. B-loo!" What next? Shall he offend her by a refusal to grant this simple request?

The preacher told his wife that night that he was taking a solemn oath that he wouldn't announce anything from the pulpit—it mattered not what were the circumstances! That would be final!

And suppose Mrs. O. D. Liverus became angry, and left the church? Well, that would be too bad. But—the decision was final.

It is a red-letter day in the preachers' experience, when, after somebody has said, "Oh, but, Mis-ter Blue! We just nev-ver do it that way!" he can reply, with a smile, but meaning it, "We are going to, from now on!"

There is good psychology in that. It makes the church worth so much more, even to the very people who are momentarily indignant.

Said D. Preston Blue, that night, as he achingly stretched his lame muscles, after the protracted conversation. "Yessir, them two things is wot ails 'er. She's a-been gettin' too much gas and not enough spark! I think, my dear, that we can renew our batteries; and I know that I can shut off the gas!"

THE END